

Huskers Illustrated

NEWS PLEASE RUSH

Volume 26, No. 2

FEBRUARY 2006 • \$3.95

Alamo Bowl One To Remember



AN AMERICAN R=EVOLUTION™

OPTION PLAY.



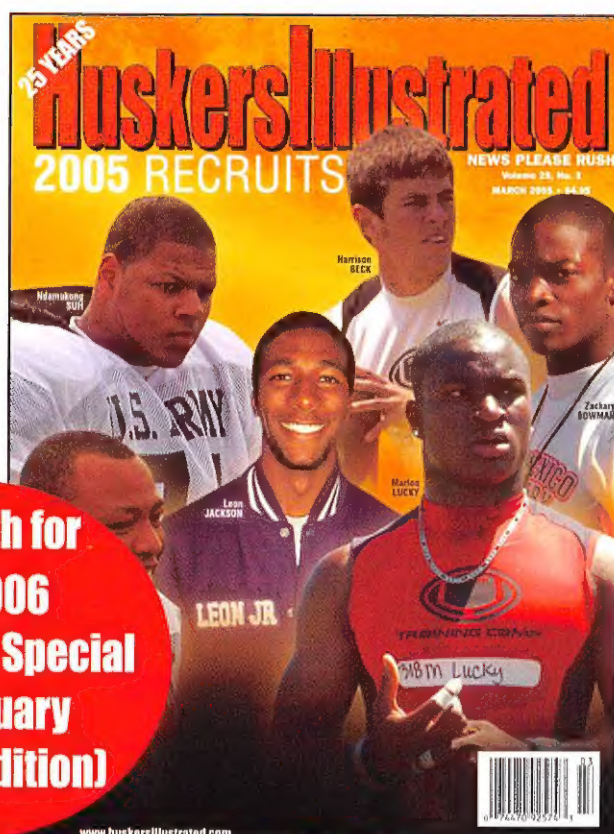
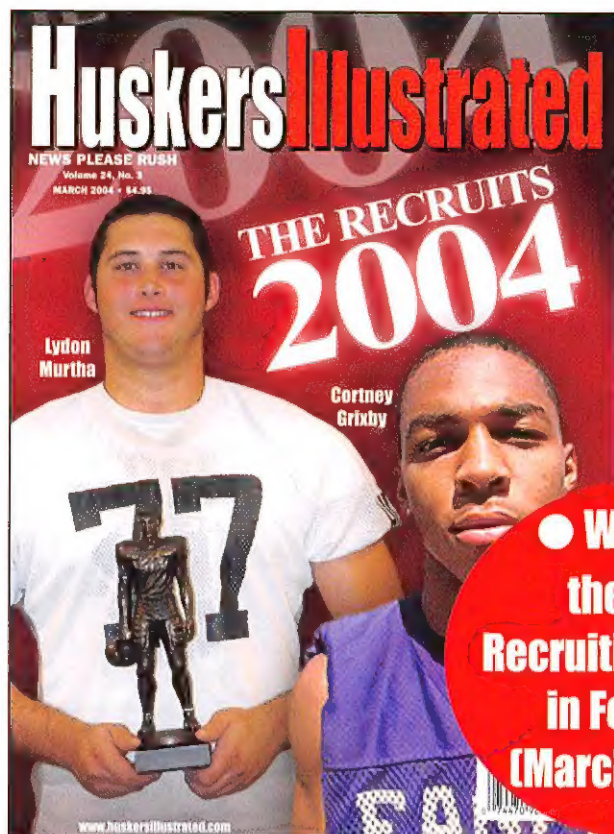
chevy™ COLORADO® | SUBURBAN® | SILVERADO® | MORE TRUCK MODELS THAN ANYONE



Call Your Local Chevy Dealer Today

Anderson Auto Group Missouri Valley, IA 642-4131 (800) 972-9790	DuTeau Chevrolet Company Lincoln, NE 420-3300 (800) 228-4183	H & H Chevrolet Company Omaha, NE 339-2222 (800) 246-2438	Sid Dillon Chevrolet Blair, NE 426-4121 (888) 722-4141	Tim O'Neill Chevrolet, Inc. Council Bluffs, IA 366-2541 (800) 432-9355
Beardmore Chevrolet, Inc. Bellevue, NE 734-2525 (800) 734-0271	Ernst Auto Center, Inc. Columbus, NE 564-2736 (800) 456-4854	Huber Chevrolet Co., Inc. Omaha, NE 496-0220	Sid Dillon Chevrolet Fremont, NE 721-2233 (888) 723-2233	Tincher Chevrolet Plattsmouth, NE 296-5000 (866) 756-3795
Gregg Young Chevrolet, Inc. Omaha, NE (800) 721-8106	Husker Auto Group, Inc. Lincoln, NE 479-7500 (888) 427-4182	Terry Thomas Auto Center Glenwood, IA 527-3181 (888) 298-3181		

All Huskers...



● Watch for
the 2006
Recruiting Special
in February
(March edition)

Huskers Illustrated

Reaching 100% Husker fans for 25+ years

- For subscription service: Call (800) 524-9527
- For updates, subscriptions and premium recruiting information:
www.huskersillustrated.com

● For clothing, merchandise and gifts:
www.shophuskersillustrated.com

... All The Time

Memorable Ending

Three straight victories give the Huskers a big boost entering 2006 season



Brian HILL

AS ONE OF THE FINAL PIECES of our 2005 Football Yearbook, we discussed whether or not to include Nebraska in our Preseason Top 25 rankings. NU was way down among "others receiving votes" in the national polls before the season.

We settled on a tie for 25th, with Texas-El Paso. The Miners lost three games in a row to finish the season 8-4 and were nowhere to be found in the final Associated Press and USA Today polls.

The team that shared the final spot in the "Huskers Illustrated Preseason Top 25" would start the season 4-0, then lose four of its next five games, before winning its last three games to also finish 8-4.

The final victory came against Michigan, a heavy favorite entering the Dec. 28 Alamo Bowl and No. 3 (behind Southern Cal and Texas) on our preseason list. The Huskers staged a memorable fourth-quarter comeback, then survived one of the most bizarre finishes in college football history. You can read much more about the Alamo Bowl and the surreal finish in this edition of Huskers Illustrated.

In this month's feature story, contributing editor Mike Babcock takes a look at the adjustments faced by freshmen Marlon Lucky and Leon Jackson. It's been almost a year since the two were among the featured members of NU's highly ranked 2005 recruiting class.

A year later, coaches are putting the finishing touches on another class. You can check out the latest commitments in

our recruiting section in this issue.

The commitment list no longer includes quarterback Josh Freeman of Grandview, Mo., who changed his mind and committed to new Kansas State coach Ron Prince. That kind of thing happens in recruiting, and nothing is final until the athletes sign letters of intent Feb. 1. The new class will be featured in our March recruiting special, published in mid-February.

The recruiting effort was no doubt helped by the thrilling performance in the Alamo Bowl and NU finishing the season with three straight victories for the first time since 1999. And when the final ratings were released the morning after Texas edged USC in the Rose Bowl, there were the Huskers at No. 24, making their first appearance in the polls since the conclusion of the 2003 season.

"It is an important step for our program to be ranked in the top 25 at the end of the season," coach Bill Callahan said. "We battled throughout the entire season and played well down the stretch to

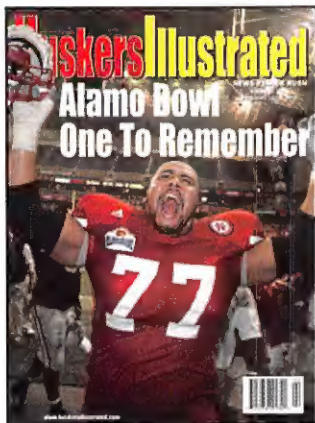
earn that position. That ranking is something we can build on as we move into the 2006 season."

Though the schedule is still not complete, two games most certainly stand out. Nebraska plays at USC Sept. 16 and plays host to Texas on Oct. 21.

After the Huskers lost 40-15 at Kansas Nov. 5 to fall to 5-4, prospects looked bleak for a bowl appearance, and the 2006 schedule certainly looked overwhelming.

Now, Nebraska closes out the season on a roll. And USC backs Reggie Bush and LenDale White and Texas quarterback Vince Young have announced that they will skip their senior seasons to turn pro.

The Trojans and Longhorns will still, no doubt, be loaded and will be at or near the top in the 2006 preseason ratings. There's also no doubt that those rankings will include the Huskers. ■



On The Cover

Senior offensive tackle Seppo Ewvaraye joins in the celebration after Nebraska rallied from an 11-point deficit to knock off Michigan 32-28 in the Dec. 28 Alamo Bowl in San Antonio. Cover photo by Scott Bruhn.

**EDITOR,
GENERAL MANAGER**
Brian Hill

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR
Mike Babcock

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
Terry Douglass, Doug Horwich,
Curt McKeever, Todd Henrichs,
Rick Shaw, Rivals.com, NU
Sports Information

**CONTRIBUTING
PHOTOGRAPHERS**
Scott Bruhn, NU Sports
Information, Rivals.com

**SPORTS MARKETING
& ADVERTISING DIRECTOR**
Jeff Tuder
(402) 423-3405

NATIONAL DISTRIBUTOR
G Associates Inc.

Huskers Illustrated (ISSN 0279-3474) is published monthly January through May and August, bi-monthly June/July and weekly September through mid-December except open dates. Single issue cost \$3.95 (yearbook \$7.95); subscription rate for one year (19 issues) is \$51.95. First Class postage is available for an additional charge of \$19.00 per year. Foreign postage \$34.00.

Huskers Illustrated is published by Landmark Community Newspapers, 2623 Regency Rd., Lexington, KY 40503. Periodicals postage paid at Lexington, KY, and additional mailing offices.

Postmaster: Send address changes to *Huskers Illustrated*, 2623 Regency Road, Lexington, KY 40503.

Address all editorial-related correspondence to *Huskers Illustrated*, 3210 NW 3rd St., Lincoln, NE 68521.

Reproduction or use of editorial or graphics content in any manner without permission is prohibited. Photographs and manuscripts for publication are welcome, but will not be acknowledged or returned unless accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. The publisher assumes no responsibility for unsolicited material.

For subscription inquiries, mail to *Huskers Illustrated*, 2623 Regency Rd., Lexington, KY 40503. Allow four to six weeks for response. Give old and new addresses and enclose latest mailing address label when writing about your subscription.

Customer Service
1-800-524-9527
Subscribe, renew or change address
9 a.m.-5 p.m. (Eastern)

HI Online
www.huskersillustrated.com

E-Mail Addresses
Editorial: hieditor@aol.com
Advertising: jefftuder@atttel.net

Huskers Illustrated

CONTENTS

FEBRUARY 2006 • VOLUME 26, NO. 2



10

12 'IT'LL BE ALL RIGHT NEXT YEAR'

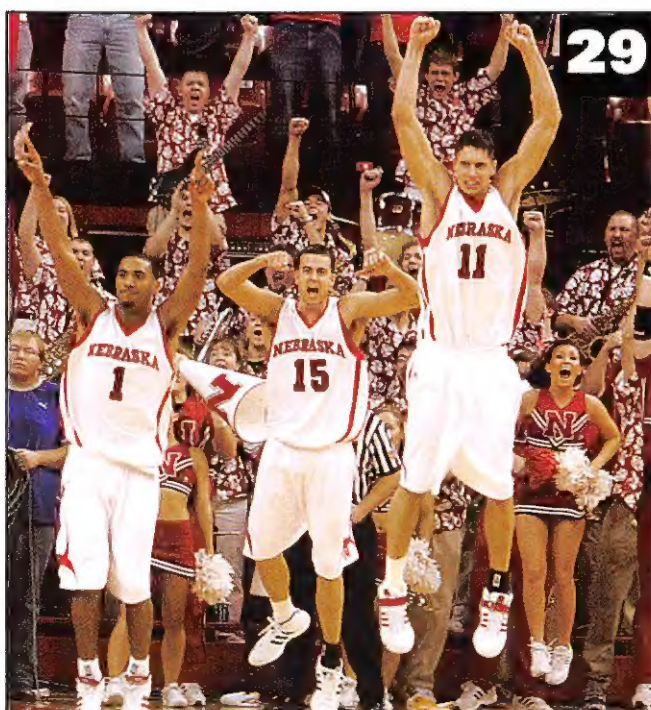
Marlon Lucky (above) and Leon Jackson helped each other through the difficult times during their freshman season at Nebraska. *By Mike Babcock*

NEXT ISSUE

The March 2006 Recruiting Edition will be mailed about Feb. 13. Check for updates at huskersillustrated.com.

DEPARTMENTS

Letter From The Editor	4
Notebook	6
<i>Nebraska wasn't the only choice for former Colorado offensive coordinator Shawn Watson.</i>	
State Of The Huskers	8
<i>Was the Alamo Bowl victory a little more satisfying because of the heat Kevin Cosgrove had taken during the season?</i>	
From The Beat	10
<i>Despite a number of changes, the Nebraska baseball team will start near the top in one poll</i>	
Another View	11
<i>Nebraska's 2005 football season featured plenty of highlights and a few rough spots.</i>	
Where Are They Now?	15
<i>L.G. Searcey was hooked when he saw his first game at Memorial Stadium.</i>	
Alamo Bowl Recap	17
Recruiting	25
<i>Coaches work to put the finishing touches on the 2006 class.</i>	
10 Questions	28
<i>For Marcus Walker, the most difficult aspect of his transition from high school has been physical.</i>	
Basketball	29
<i>Nebraska opened Big 12 play on a positive note.</i>	
Volleyball	32
<i>A loss at the end overshadows a tremendous season.</i>	
Crossword Puzzle, Huskernutz	37
Final Word	38



29

No Stranger

Bill Callahan had to recruit Shawn Watson. California and San Diego State were interested in the former offensive coordinator at Colorado, too. Watson will coach Nebraska's tight ends, replacing Scott Downing, who left to become the head coach at Northern Colorado.

The 46-year-old Watson spent the past seven seasons at Colorado, the last six as offensive coordinator. He has 24 years of collegiate coaching experience, including three years as the head coach at Southern Illinois, where he played safety for two seasons after transferring from Illinois.

"I love what is happening at Nebraska right now and the direction the program is heading," Watson said in a sports information office release. "I am really excited to get an opportunity to work for Coach Callahan. He has been a coaching mentor to me, and I have a lot of respect for what he has already accomplished at Nebraska and the plan he has in place for the future."

Callahan is no stranger to Watson. The two were assistants together at Illinois under coach Mike White from 1983 to 1986, even sharing an office for the two years.

Watson left Illinois for Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, where he was an assistant for seven years, coaching the tight ends, wide receivers and quarterbacks and serving as recruiting coordinator.

He returned to Southern Illinois, where he began his coaching career as a graduate assistant, and coached the Salukis from 1994 to 1996 before joining Gary Barnett's staff at



Shawn Watson

Northwestern as quarterbacks coach. And when Barnett left for Colorado, Watson went along.

Watson became coordinator of the Buffaloes' West Coast offense in 2000. California and San Diego State both offered him jobs as offensive coordinator, according to newspaper reports.

In addition to coaching the tight ends, Downing also worked with the kicking specialists and coordinated recruiting. Callahan had yet to re-

assign those responsibilities.

Callahan also has added Keith Heckendorf and Jon Osterhout to his staff as graduate assistants, replacing Aaron Stamn and Angus McClure, both of whom left to become full-time assistants at Buffalo University under former Cornhusker player and assistant coach Turner Gill.

Heckendorf served as Nebraska's offensive video intern in 2005, while Osterhout spent the last five seasons at Sacramento State, where he coached the defensive line and tight ends.

NEBRASKA INFLUENCE

Former Cornhusker quarterback and assistant coach Turner Gill, the new head coach at Buffalo University, has put together a staff heavy in Nebraska connections. Among those he has hired are former Cornhuskers Jimmy Williams and Brian Mohnsen. Williams, who was an assistant at Nebraska, will coach inside linebackers and serve as co-defensive coordinator, while Mohnsen will coach the defensive line.

Gill also has hired Aaron Stamn (tight ends) and Angus McClure (offensive line), both of whom were graduate assistants on coach Bill Callahan's staff this past season.



MASCOT OF THE YEAR

Nebraska's Herbie Husker was announced as the Capital One Mascot of the Year at half-time of the Capital One Bowl, defeating Sam the Minuteman of Massachusetts in fan voting during the championship round. Herbie was among 12 mascots who began the competition.

Voting began Sept. 1. The award carries with it \$10,000 for the University of Nebraska. The other mascots in the competition were: Aubie (Auburn), Bruiser (Baylor), Joe Bruin (UCLA), Buzz (Georgia Tech), Cocky (South Carolina), Big Jay (Kansas), Sebastian (Miami), Purdue Pete (Purdue), Smokey (Tennessee), Butch T. Cougar (Washington State).

BIG 12 CONFERENCE ANNOUNCES 10TH ANNIVERSARY FOOTBALL TEAM

Nebraska placed three players on the conference's 10th anniversary team: Ralph Brown, Aaron Taylor and Grant Wistrom. Brown, a cornerback, started every game during his Cornhusker career and holds the school career record for pass break-ups with 50. Taylor, an offensive lineman, was a two-time All-American and Outland Trophy winner in 1997. Wistrom, a rush end, also was a two-time All-American and the Lombardi Award winner on the 1997 national championship team.

Offense

OL — Taylor (1994-97); Jammal Brown, Oklahoma (2001-04); Seth McKinney, Texas A&M (1998-01); Andre Gurode, Colorado (1998-01); Leonard Davis, Texas (1997-00)

TE — Daniel Graham, Colorado (1998-01)

WR — Roy Williams, Texas (2000-03); Rashaun Woods,



Ralph Brown



Aaron Taylor



Grant Wistrom

Oklahoma State (2000-03)

QB — Jason White, Oklahoma (2000-2004)

RB — Ricky Williams, Texas (1995-98); Troy Davis, Iowa State (1994-96)

PK — Martin Gramatica, Kansas State (1994-95, 97-98)

KR — Ben Kelly, Colorado (1997-99)

Defense

DL — Wistrom (1994-97);

Tommie Harris, Oklahoma (2001-03); Dan Cody, Oklahoma (2000, 02-04); Justin Smith, Missouri (1998-00)

LB — Derrick Johnson, Texas (2001-04); Rocky Calmus, Oklahoma (1998-01); Dat Nguyen, Texas A&M (1995-98)

DB — Brown (1996-98); Roy Williams, Oklahoma (1999-01); Quentin Jammer, Texas (1997-98, 00-01); Terence Newman, Kansas State (1999-02)

P — Shane Lechler, Texas A&M (1996-99)

PR — David Allen, Kansas State (1997-00)

Quick Hits

FRESHMAN ALL-AMERICANS

Cornhuskers Barry Turner and Jordan Congdon were included on the fifth annual Football Writers Association of American and Scripps Freshman All-America Team. Nebraska was among only three teams to place more than one player on the team. Arkansas had three, Florida State two.

Turner, a defensive end from Antioch, Tenn., set a school freshman record with six sacks. He was credited with 14 tackles, including seven for losses, and six quarterback hurries.

Congdon, a place-kicker from San Diego, broke the school single-season record for field goals with 19, in 23 attempts, and was successful on 31-of-32 extra-point kicks.

FOOTBALL AWARDS

I-back Cory Ross and punter Sam Koch each received two awards at the football team's annual banquet in mid-December.

Ross was chosen as the Cornhuskers' offensive MVP (in a vote of his teammates) and received the Tom Novak Trophy, which is presented to the senior who "best exemplifies courage and determination despite all odds in the manner of Nebraska All-America center Tom Novak."

Koch was chosen as the special teams MVP and received the Chamberlin Trophy, presented to the senior "who has shown by the play and contributions to the betterment of the University of Nebraska football squad that he has the qualities and dedication of Guy Chamberlin to the great Cornhusker tradition. The Chamberlin and Tom Novak Trophy winners are selected by a media vote.

Junior defensive end Adam Carriker was named defensive MVP. Defensive tackle Titus Adams received the Cletus Fischer Native Son Award, selected by the coaches and presented to the senior "who best exemplifies the following qualities: good work ethic, competitiveness, leadership, forthrightness, sense of humor, pride, loyalty and love of Nebraska."

Freshman Leon Jackson, a safety who played receiver on the scout team, was the offensive scout team MVP, while junior linebacker Andy Kadavy was the defensive scout team MVP.

VOLLEYBALL AWARDS

The American Volleyball Coaches Association (AVCA) selected the Huskers' Christina Houghtelling as the Division I national player of the year. The junior from Cambridge, Neb., is the third Husker to be so honored, following Greichaly Cepero (2000) and Allison Weston (1995), a co-winner.

The award was announced at a banquet in San Antonio, Texas, during the NCAA championships. "When I heard, 'Christina,' I said, 'There is no way.' And when they said, 'Houghtelling,' I said, 'No, this is not happening.' I would have never really expected this to happen in my life," said Houghtelling, a first-team AVCA All-American along with teammates Melissa Elmer and Sarah Pavan.

Jennifer Saleaumua, two-time Big 12 defensive player of the year, was a third-team honoree.

For the second time in six seasons, Husker coach John Cook was chosen as the Division I national coach of the year. He also won the award in the 2000 national championship season.

PLAY BALL

Nebraska, which has advanced to the College World Series in Omaha three times in the last five seasons, was ranked fourth in Collegiate Baseball's preseason poll released in late December. Coach Mike Anderson's Cornhuskers were among three Big 12 teams in the poll's top 15. Defending NCAA champion Texas was No. 1 and Missouri was No. 14. Baylor was No. 23, and Oklahoma was No. 29.

The top 10 (last season's record): Texas (56-16), Florida (48-23), Oregon State (46-12), Nebraska (57-15), Rice (45-19), Clemson (43-23), North Carolina (41-19-1), Florida State (53-20), Cal State-Fullerton (46-18), Georgia Tech (45-19).

The Cornhuskers are scheduled to open the season on Feb. 16 against Charleston Southern, with their home opener slated for March 10 against Alabama.

Collegiate Baseball included pitchers Joba Chamberlain and Brett Jensen on its preseason All-America first team and pitcher

Johnny Dorn on its All-America second team, while Chamberlain and Dorn were second-team and Jensen was third team, according to the National Collegiate Baseball Writers.

Chamberlain and Dorn also have been included on the 2006 Brooks Wallace Award Watch List. The Wallace Award is presented to the nation's top collegiate player. Former Cornhusker Alex Gordon received the award last season.

BASEBALL RECRUITS

The baseball team's 2006 recruiting class will include 12 players who signed in November, 11 of them high school seniors. Mitch Abeita, a catcher from Duncanville, Texas, is the lone exception. He is playing a second season at North Central (Texas) Community College.

The rest of the class: D.J. Belfonte, OF (Gladstone, Mo.); Joe Broekemeier, RHP (Aurora, Neb.); Andy Cotton, INF (Lincoln, Neb.); Brian Feekin, LHP (Papillion, Neb.); Aaron Jarosh, OF (Ankeny, Iowa); Shane Lowe, INF (New Bloomfield, Mo.); Zach McAllister, RHP (Chillicothe, Ill.); Michael Nesseth, RHP (Windorn, Minn.); Sam Sharpe, RHP (Stillwell, Kan.); Charlie Shaver, LHP (Elkhorn, Neb.); Brett Sowers, INF (Englewood, Colo.).

GYMNASTICS

Three former Cornhusker men's gymnasts have been inducted into the United States Olympic Hall of Fame: Scott Johnson (1980-83), Jim Mikus (1981-84) and Jim Hartung (1979-82), who currently serves as a Nebraska assistant. The three were members of the 1984 Olympic team, which won the first and only gold medal in U.S. men's gymnastics. The others on that team, also inducted, were Bart Conner, Tim Daggett, Mitch Gaylord and Peter Vidmar.

Former Husker gymnast Richelle Simpson was among eight recipients of the prestigious NCAA Top Eight Award for 2005. The award is the highest bestowed by the NCAA and is based on outstanding achievement in athletics, academics, leadership in the community and campus activities.

Simpson, the first Nebraska women's gymnast to be so honored, was a nine-time All-American and eight-time conference champion. She was the 2003 NCAA all-around and floor-exercise champion.

Simpson is Nebraska's 15th Top Eight Award winner. The others: Randy Schleusener (football, 1981), Dave Rimington (football, 1983), Mark Traynowicz (football, 1985), Tom Schlesinger (gymnastics, 1989), Jake Young (football, 1990), Virginia Stahr (volleyball, 1990), Pat Tyrance (football, 1991), Patrick Kirksey (gymnastics, 1991), Janet Kruse (volleyball, 1992), Rob Zatechka (football, 1994), Trev Alberts (football, 1994), Aaron Graham (football, 1996), Grant Wistrom (football, 1998), Nancy Metcalf (volleyball, 2002).

ACADEMICS

Four Cornhuskers earned first-team Academic All-America recognition in the fall semester, football players Dane Todd and Kurt Mann and volleyball players Sarah Pavan and Christina Houghtelling. Todd, Mann and Houghtelling are juniors, while Pavan is a sophomore. Todd and Pavan both have perfect 4.0 cumulative grade-point averages, Todd in biological sciences and Pavan in biochemistry. Mann has a 3.97 GPA in mechanized systems management. Houghtelling has a 3.90 GPA in elementary education.

ESPN the Magazine sponsors the Academic All-America Teams, which are selected by the College Sports Information Directors of America (CoSIDA).

Nebraska placed a conference-best 22 players on the Academic All-Big 12 Football Team, including 15 on the first team. In addition to Todd and Mann, the first-team selections, minimum 3.20 GPA:

Seniors — Chris Bryant (business education), Adam Ickes (business administration), Brandon Koch (social science education), Joey Robison (mechanized systems management), Mike Stuntz (professional golf management), Blake Tiedtke (exercise science)

Juniors — Brandon Ragoni (psychology), Andrew Shanle (family and consumer science education)

Sophomores — Cortney Grixby (business administration), J.B. Phillips (marketing)

Redshirted freshmen — Todd Peterson (nutritional science and dietetics), Nate Swift (undecided) ■



R. Simpson



C. Houghtelling

Staying Cool

Blackshirts have strong returning cast, along with their leader



Mike BABCOCK

THE QUESTION suggested vindication. Was Nebraska's Alamo Bowl game victory a little more satisfying because of the heat he had taken during the season?

Cornhusker defensive coordinator Kevin Cosgrove continued to smile.

"I have?" he said. "You guys would know that, right?"

The implication was that he hadn't been aware of any heat.

"I try to stay away from the papers, just try to do my job," he said.

Actually, the question wasn't posed by a newspaper reporter. But that's not the point.

Anyway, less than two weeks after the game, those who don't try to stay away from the papers were confronted by the possibility of Cosgrove's doing his job elsewhere, specifically with the NFL's Minnesota Vikings. That possibility drew a large headline on the front sports page of the Jan. 10 edition of the Lincoln Journal Star. It said: "STAYING PUT." And a smaller sub-head summarized the situation: "Defensive coordinator seriously considers offer from Vikings, but decides to stay at NU."

Two months earlier, some fans might have been disappointed by such news.

Three consecutive losses in which the defense allowed 41, 31 and 40 points led to the unhappiness to which the post-Alamo Bowl question referred. And that wasn't taking into consideration, necessarily, disaffection with the defense over the Cornhuskers' 5-6 record in 2004.

But all the unhappiness faded in the glow of a strong finish.

Whether or not he reads the papers, Cosgrove has been coaching long enough to know that not everyone will approve of the job he does, regardless of how well he does it. And he did it well this season. Numbers support that. The Blackshirts improved markedly in scoring defense and total defense. But statistics have to be taken in context. Most importantly, they added up to an 8-4 record.

The message conveyed by the Colorado and Michigan victories, in particular, was: Hey, folks, Nebraska is back on track, offense, defense, special teams, the works.

In any case, beyond the numbers, Cosgrove turned a suspect position prior to the season, linebacker, into one of the team's strongest. And that was despite the loss of three starters to injuries.

The players deserved much of the credit, but not to the exclusion of their coach. Nebraska will have five linebackers with starting experience next season — as well as the man who coached them.

Cosgrove also would have coached the linebackers at Minnesota, where Brad Childress is in charge after replacing

Mike Tice. And reportedly, he would have earned a lot more than he is now. According to the Journal Star, the Vikings offered in "the \$300,000 to \$400,000 range."

The opportunity was no surprise, given the fact that Cosgrove and Childress have a history together. They were assistants at Wisconsin under Barry Alvarez. But then, Cosgrove and Bill Callahan have a history together, too, going back to Illinois Benedictine, where they were teammates.

Had Cosgrove left, Nebraska would have had a fourth defensive coordinator in the past five years. And the negative implications of such a turnover should be obvious.

This season's success was in part the result of a cohesion that was lacking a year ago, according to senior defensive tackle Le Kevin Smith. "It's taken this time for the wounds and scars that were made last year to start to heal. I think that's the biggest change, just the time," he said prior to the Alamo Bowl game. "There were so many people that didn't want to see this staff come in."

He saw the healing, and even before the victory in San Antonio he was optimistic about the program's direction. "I think it's going to be great here in the next year or so," he said. "Of course, it's going to be even better once they get more of their own guys and learn the system because, in a way, you're still competing with guys that are from a completely different system."

The Cornhuskers' having to adjust to the West Coast offense has drawn most of the attention, with justification. It has been a big change. But the defense has had to adjust, too.

Five players who started the Alamo Bowl game on defense have completed their eligibility: Smith and tackle Titus Adams, linebacker Adam Ickes and safeties Daniel Bullocks and Blake Tiedtke.

But junior defensive end Adam Carriker announced he was returning, after considering the possibility of leaving early by way of the NFL draft, as Josh Bullocks and Fabian Washington did a year ago.

Injured linebackers Stewart Bradley, Bo Ruud and Steve Octavien are back, as are end Jay Moore, linebackers Corey McKeon and Lance Brandenburgh and cornerbacks Cortney Grixby and Zack Bowman. Also, Tierre Green, an early season starter at cornerback, will move to safety.

"We've got great kids, man," Cosgrove said after the Alamo Bowl game. "They're fun to be around. They practice hard. They play hard. They've got a great attitude. It was awesome."

So is his return. And presumably those are some of the reasons. ■



Kevin Cosgrove will be back for his third season at Nebraska.

Mike Babcock is a former sports columnist for the Lincoln Journal Star. He has covered Nebraska football for more than 25 years. Mike can be reached at MBABCOCK1@neb.rr.com or P.O. Box 6782, Lincoln, NE 68506.

Try Our Version of the 3-4 Defense Duty, Honor, Country



12 inch wall clock \$31.45



Prospect \$31.95



Pro II \$73.95



Men's/Women's
Bracelet All-Star
\$104.95



Men's/Women's
Leather All-Star
\$94.45



Rookie \$41.95

Huskers Time

LogoArt®



8 x 21 binoculars \$41.95



Starlette Black leather
\$83.95



Starlette leather
\$83.95



Starlette bracelet
\$94.95

Checks payable to: Huskers Illustrated • PO Box 1498 • Shelbyville, KY 40066
Order number and fax: 800-524-9527 • 859-278-3477 fax
Credit Cards accepted: MC, Visa, AMEX and Discover

Sales Tax: 5% Nebraska State sales tax is included in product prices.
Sales Tax will be deducted from out of state orders.
Shipping: \$10. UPS ground shipping and handling. Allow 2-4 weeks for delivery.

Shop for additional Nebraska merchandise at www.shophuskersillustrated.com

High Hopes

*Despite a number of changes,
NU will start near the top in one poll*



Curt McKEEVER

THIS IS HOW YOU KNOW there's an enormous amount of respect for the Nebraska baseball program.

The 2006 Huskers will be without last year's national player of the year, three other position starters and two pitchers who combined to go 15-2, and yet when Collegiate Baseball published its preseason national rankings, NU was No. 4.

For fourth-year coach Mike Anderson, that's pretty heady stuff.

"It would be nice to think (No. 4 is) where we might end up," Anderson said. "To put us No. 4 (at the start), that's not deserving. We've got some people that are talented, but unproven, so they've got to develop. But I still think that this is a team that will be a quality team."

To show how fluky polls can be, especially ones conducted before anybody throws a pitch or swings a bat, NU is not among those ranked by Baseball America.

"I think they're both a little crazy," Anderson said.

That, of course, might be the best description for how Nebraska has come from the bottom of the Big 12 Conference to being one of the top programs in the country.

In addition to losing third baseman Alex Gordon, the second player taken in last June's Major League Baseball draft, and dependable veteran starting pitchers Brian Duensing and Zach Kroenke, this season the Huskers will be working under new pitching coach Dave Bingham, as Rob Childress left to become head coach at Texas A&M.

Anderson also is turning over the reigns as hitting coach to fourth-year assistant Andy Sawyers so he can oversee more areas in his program.

Despite all the change, Nebraska garners high expectations largely because it returns 15 letter-winners from the 57-15 club that won the Big 12 and the school's first game at the College World Series.

Headlining that group are three right-handed pitchers: junior Joba Chamberlain, an All-American last season after compiling a 10-2 record as the No. 1 starter, sophomore Johnny Dorn, who went 12-2 and was the Big 12 Freshman Pitcher of the Year, and senior Brett Jensen, who saved a school-record 16 games.

A year ago, Chamberlain was an unproven talent who had a losing record while pitching one year at NCAA Division II Nebraska-Kearney. Dorn was an unknown kid from Grand Island. And Jensen was just learning how to become a successful closer.

"That's the heart of Nebraska baseball right there. That just shows you the work ethic of Midwest guys — Johnny being from Grand Island, myself (from Lincoln) and Brett being from Iowa," Chamberlain said. "That's what makes Nebraska baseball — to outwork everybody in the country and just believe in ourselves, even if nobody else does."

Anderson agreed that it's become an expectation at Nebraska for young players to step into the limelight and produce.

"We weren't talking about Johnny Dorn the way we're talking

about him now. We didn't talk about Joba that way. Everybody knew Alex, but not the way they know Alex now. Even Alex developed. That's fun. That's incredible.

"I have my guesses on which freshmen or junior college kids are going to do that (this year). I mean, that's why we recruited them. Somebody's going to step up, that's the fun part of it. And then next year, we'll be talking about this kid has this potential."

So who are those guys on the 2006 Huskers?

Chamberlain has been impressed with redshirt freshman pitchers Drew Schwab and Charlie Shirek, along with junior college transfer Jared Cranston.

Position players who could get early opportunities to become household names include sophomore Jake Mort (utility), redshirt freshman outfielder Nick Sullivan and junior college transfers Andrew Brown (utility), Luke Gorsett (outfield), Nick Jaros (outfield) and Steve Edlefsen (third base).

Anderson said Nebraska's fall practice was possibly "the best effort in the 12 years I have been here as a coach. They are extremely enthusiastic and have bought into the Nebraska style of baseball. We have a lot of things we need to do in order to play this game the right way. But we've got a lot of talent to work with, too."

Chamberlain was impressed by the new players' knowledge of the game.

"We had guys doing things that are overlooked," he said. "I think that's the love for the game of the guys coming in. It was tremendous to see how hard they worked."

Nebraska will have to overcome a season-ending shoulder injury suffered by Ryan Bohanan, who was slated to replace Gordon at third base. Sophomore outfielder Andy Gerch, who hit .364 last season and was one of the hottest Huskers down the stretch, is coming back from a similar injury but is expected to be at full speed by March and to be able to hit when NU's season begins.

Dorn also hasn't pitched in a game since spraining his elbow while making a play in the field during Nebraska's CWS loss to Florida. But he has been throwing bullpens and is considered by Anderson to be 100 percent.

Apparently, his program is held in the same light.

"The day-to-day thing is still there," Chamberlain said when asked what motivated him for the 2006 season. "We're not last year's team. We've got to go out and prove it again that we are one of the best teams in the country."

Added Anderson: "Keeping this program at a high level, that's motivation all the time. My other motivation is doing kids right. If you treat them right, good things will happen."

The Huskers start practice on Jan. 19. Their season begins at Charleston Southern on Feb. 16, followed by tournaments on three straight weekends before the home opener against Alabama March 10. ■



Mike Anderson says the preseason polls are "a little crazy."

Curt McKeever is a sportswriter for the Lincoln Journal Star. In addition to reporting on football, he is the primary beat writer for the men's basketball and baseball teams. He can be reached at cmckeever@journalstar.com

Most Memorable

*There were plenty of highlights
... and a few rough spots*



**Terry
DOUGLASS**

NEBRASKA'S 2005 FOOTBALL SEASON featured plenty of highlights and a few rough spots. But all in all, it was a very entertaining year for Cornhusker football fans as their team returned to a bowl game and finished the season back in the top 25.

Here are some of the "most memorables" of 2005:

● **Best newcomer: Zac Taylor** — After a slow start, Taylor proved that he was indeed the quick fix for Nebraska's quarterbacking needs in the West Coast offense. The junior college transfer from Norman, Okla., finished the year with a single-season school-record 2,653 yards passing. Taylor threw 19 touchdown passes and set single-season Husker marks with 237 completions in 430 pass attempts. Taylor also set NU single-game records for pass attempts (55), completions (36) and passing yards (433) in a 27-20 double-overtime win against Iowa State.

● **Career achievement: Cory Ross** — When Husker fans look back on the transition from the old-school Nebraska style of offense to the West Coast system, they should fondly remember the little I-back who could. At 5-foot-6, Ross stood tall in his final two-plus years in Lincoln, ending ninth on the school's all-time rushing charts (2,743 yards) and set the position single-season receiving mark with 43 catches in 2005.

● **Biggest surprise: Corey McKeon** — While members of the media took an instant shining to McKeon's penchant for being "Mr. Soundbite," few expected the sophomore to play at a level that would ease the pain of losing all-time leading tackler Barrett Ruud at middle linebacker. However, McKeon did more than just talk, leading the team with 98 tackles, including a position-record 22 tackles for loss.

● **Big in the Big 12: Nate Swift** — The red-shirt freshman didn't have a single reception in three non-conference games, but exploded onto the scene once conference play rolled around. Swift had a freshman-record 45 catches — the third-best single-season performance in the program's history — and his seven TD receptions tied for the team lead with Nunn and marked the most TD catches by a Husker since tight end Gerald Armstrong in 1992.

● **Mission accomplished: The Blackshirts** — After producing just 25 sacks in 2004, Nebraska's coaching staff made getting more heat on the quarterback an offseason priority. The Huskers responded by leading the nation with 50 sacks this past season. Defensive end Adam Carriker led the way with 9.5 sacks.

● **Best catch: Todd Peterson** — There were a few other solid nominees, but Peterson's running, lunging 34-yard TD reception from Taylor against Missouri gets the nod after Nebraska offensive coordinator Jay Norvell called the reception one of the best he's seen. Peterson ran a precise route and hauled in perfectly thrown ball by Taylor — catching the bottom half of the pigskin — just before stepping inside the pylon and into the end zone.

● **Best run: Ross** — While the ground game wasn't often a highlight in 2005, Ross' burst through the line and sprint to

the end zone on a 31-yard TD run midway through the fourth quarter of the Alamo Bowl played a major role in sparking Nebraska's 11-point fourth-quarter rally to beat Michigan, 32-28. The senior I-back capped his career by rushing for 161 yards on 28 carries.

● **Best pass: Taylor** — When NU coach Bill Callahan was asked to describe a defining moment of Taylor's season, he pointed to a 15-yard TD pass Taylor threw to Terrence Nunn in the third quarter of the Texas Tech game. On the play, Taylor rolled to his right and waited as long as possible to buy enough time for Nunn to break free. At the last possible second before being drilled by a Red Raider defender, he stepped into the throw and fired a perfect strike to Nunn.

● **Best hit: Lance Brandenburg** — While the Blackshirts dealt several big blows this season, linebacker Lance Brandenburg's hit on a Michigan receiver early in the Alamo Bowl ranks as one of the most bone-jarring. Making his first career start, Brandenburg nearly duplicated the feat with another big hit later in the game.

● **Best interception: Zackary Bowman** — His interception of Michigan quarterback Chad Henne's pass in the back of the end zone in the Alamo Bowl was so good that it eventually took an instant replay review for officials to correctly rule that Bowman had actually gotten a foot down before finally falling out of bounds.

● **Best return: Stewart Bradley** — While Nunn's 62-yard punt returns against Maine and Pittsburgh rank high, you must reach the end zone to qualify. With that in mind, the honor goes to Bradley. Teased by fellow linebackers Bo Ruud and McKeon for not having scored a TD, Bradley picked off a pass and rumbled 43 yards for a score — one of three defensive TDs against Wake Forest.

● **Best prediction: Adam Ickes** — A walk-on from Page, Ickes' gained acclaim for blocking Josh Cummings' 46-yard field goal attempt on the final play of the game to preserve a 7-6 win over Pittsburgh. What's more? Ickes told his roommate, Bradley, the night before the game that he would

block a kick against the Panthers. "Adam isn't the type of person who normally says those kinds of things, so when he told me, I knew he was serious," Bradley said.

● **Best legs: Sam Koch/Jordan Congdon** — With apologies to the Scarlets and the cheerleading squad, punter Sam Koch and place-kicker Jordan Congdon possessed the best — or at least most valuable stems — in Memorial Stadium. Koch averaged a school-record 46.51 yards per punt, while Congdon established a new NU single-season mark with 19 field goals.

● **Best performance: vs. Colorado** — It finally all came together for Nebraska during its 30-3 road victory at Colorado. In the best performance by coach Bill Callahan's team during his two-year stint in Lincoln, the Huskers piled up nearly 500 yards of total offense while almost blanking the North Division champion Buffaloes. More performances like that and the Huskers will be well on their way to accomplishing their quest to "restore the order" in the Big 12. ■



**Cory Ross' 31-yard
touchdown run
sparked the Huskers.**

Terry Douglass is the sports editor of the Grand Island Independent. He can be reached at terry.douglass@charter.net



Marlon Lucky (20, above) played in all 12 games as a reserve I-back and kick returner. Fellow freshman Leon Jackson (23, right) saw action in nine games, mostly on special teams.

'It'll be all right next year'

By Mike Babcock
Photos by Scott Bruhn

***Anxious
freshmen
help each
other through
difficult times***

Yes, Marlon Lucky thought about going home. He really did.

Four games into the season, he was frustrated about his lack of playing time. And he was homesick, a lethal combination for a freshman. "I was all messed up," he said.

He can laugh about it now. But he wasn't laughing then. After carrying the ball 13 times in the opening game, Lucky found himself watching from the sideline, wondering when his next meaningful opportunity would come.



He carried twice against Wake Forest for 3 yards and once against Pittsburgh for a 4-yard loss. Then he didn't carry at all against Iowa State. "I was kind of getting mad," he said.

Lucky questioned his decision to come to Nebraska and read the comments of others on the Internet, wondering why he wasn't playing more. Strangers would ask. And he would have no answer. "I don't know," he would say. "The coaches will put me in when they want to put me in."

Finally, toward the end of the season, he began to understand and accept the situation.

Leon Jackson was similarly frustrated. Watching from the sideline was a foreign experience, and he had difficulty coping. If not for his fiancée, who is attending Southeast Community College in Lincoln, he probably would have packed up and gone home to Pasco, Wash.

Oh yes, Lucky kept him focused,

FEATURE STORY

too. After all, misery loves company. And he and Lucky were miserable, "like, 'Man, just forget it; it's not here. This isn't the place,'" Jackson said.

Jackson really can't laugh about it yet. But by season's end, he was getting closer. Acceptance is one thing, understanding another. And at least he was beginning to understand.

"It's like a disease, a freshman disease," he said. "Every freshman goes through it. It happened to us. That's it. I'm pretty sure all around the country there are freshmen that are upset.

"It'll be all right next year. We won't be freshmen anymore."

Lucky will still be an I-back, however, while Jackson will be a wide receiver, assuming he doesn't switch positions again. That was part of the frustration, a position-identity crisis.

Jackson began his college career as a

running back, after a delayed start to fall practice. He moved to safety, expecting a better opportunity to play.

And now he has moved to wide receiver.

"It's still messing with my head," he said during Alamo Bowl practices. "It's been a lot of stress because now I've got to learn another thing. But I always wanted the ball in my hands. So I might as well suck it up and learn something new. I feel good about it. I'm fine with it."

A little conviction in his voice would have been more convincing.

"Right now, I'm still clueless," he said. In reality, though, he was probably too harsh on himself. He played wide receiver well enough that the coaches chose him as the season's offensive scout squad MVP. Plus, he contributed on the kickoff team, after not playing in the first two games.

Lucky encouraged him, helping him through the difficult times, and

vice versa. It was that way from the beginning of preseason practice, with Cody Glenn contributing, too.

All three were running backs, and "looking out for each other's backs," said Jackson. "If we didn't know, we were right on each other. And if we were slacking, we were on each other.

"We're not going to let you fall down on your knees. We're going to be the ones to pick you up, tell you it's going to be all right. I think that's how our relationship is. I think our personalities are similar."

Glenn's experience was no different. He played in only seven games, but finished as the team's second-leading rusher with 131 yards and four touchdowns on 45 carries. Lucky carried 43 times for 129 yards. He got one of those carries, for 3 yards, in the Alamo Bowl game.

By season's end, Lucky was philosophical about the situation.

"It's been a good experience. I came in expecting to get a lot of carries, a lot of playing time. But I had to realize I had to get focused and learn the plays and all," he said.

The "and all" included learning pass-protection blocking. Running backs coach Randy Jordan encouraged

him "to be more aggressive with it, be like a bulldog, put them on their back or something like that," said Lucky. "I'll get in there and stick 'em. I read it better and stick my head in there."

He stuck his head into the fray around the quarterback and came away with, among other things, jammed fingers. He was "all messed up."

The standard by which he was measured stood 5-foot-6 and weighed 195 pounds, Cory Ross. "He's little and he was sticking. 'Man, I'm bigger than him, and I'm like a little girl,'" Lucky said.

"He sticks his head in there. He doesn't care."

During training camp, Lucky learned great respect for weakside linebacker Steve Octavien, who was sidelined for the season before the first half of the opening game was finished.

After Octavien, his practice nemesis became fellow freshman middle linebacker Phillip Dillard. "Phil's like a d-end; 250 pounds, that's a lot coming at you, a freight train," said Lucky.

Now his attention has turned to winter conditioning and then to spring practice, when he and Glenn and sophomore Brandon Jackson will com-

pete for the job vacated by Ross.

And junior college transfer Kenny Wilson will join the I-back competition in the fall.

Leon Jackson is looking no further than the spring, "when we're going to have to kick it in gear," he said. "That's what we promised each other. And that's what we're going to do." Lucky has tried to convince him the situation will improve, that "it's going to change. And I'm praying it will."

Though he didn't see as much action as he had hoped, or expected, Lucky led the team in kickoff returns. "I got a few carries, not as many as I thought I would," he said. But "I'll take that."

In retrospect, his experience might have been typical. "Most freshmen are like that. Everybody's not Adrian Peterson," he said of the Oklahoma running back and freshman sensation of a year ago. "They get here and they don't get a lot of carries, but they've got to learn and just catch up with other people."

He learned, and was catching up. But he couldn't wait to get home to North Hollywood, Calif., after the Alamo Bowl game — for a visit, however, not to stay. ■



Bob Devaney, 1915-1997

Dream big.

 First National Bank

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

In His Blood

He was hooked after seeing his first game at Memorial Stadium

By Mike Babcock

This is theoretical of course. It's not going to happen. But just suppose . . .

Suppose that Tom Osborne suddenly decided to give up politics and return to coaching. And suppose that he were to ask L.G. Searcey to join his staff as an assistant coach.

"I'd probably jump in a second," Searcey said recently.

Searcey considered his response then qualified it, even though it was only theoretical. Maybe he wouldn't jump at the chance to coach. "My wife would probably divorce me," he said.

"I don't know if I'd really do it. But I'd want to."

To put that in context, Searcey is a senior vice-president of Union Bank & Trust in Lincoln. He's been in banking since 1982, following his final season at Nebraska.

He didn't play as a senior. In fact, he didn't play much during his Cornhusker career because of knee problems, although he did earn a letter as a defensive back in 1980.

And yet he speaks of his time at Nebraska with great affection. "It was a tremendous experience for me," he said. "I saw things and did things I thought were never really possible."

Cornhusker football was in his blood, and still is. Large framed prints commemorating Nebraska's national championships in 1995 and 1997 adorn his office wall. The prints



L.G. Searcey earned a letter as a defensive back in 1980 and served as a graduate assistant after suffering a serious knee injury.

appear to be part of a series. But he has never seen one commemorating the 1994 season, he said. He's still looking.

Nebraska was a combined 60-3 in Osborne's final five seasons, and a national title contender in each of those seasons. "I don't think we get enough credit," said Searcey.

"They talk about USC; that isn't even close to what we did in that stretch."

To know his background is to understand that passion. He grew up on a farm in southeast Nebraska, near Barneston, and graduated from Wymore Southern High School. His dad has had season tickets at

Memorial Stadium for 60 years, on the west side, 11 rows up, in Section 21.

At age 84, Russell Searcey "can't go to many games anymore," L.G. said. But he still pours over football media guides to make sure the historical stuff is properly recorded.

Tom "Trainwreck" Novak was as tough as they come. L.G. has heard all of the stories, such as how Novak once broke his collarbone hitting a ball carrier with his chest.

"I don't know if it's really true," said L.G. "But 'nobody was ever tougher.'"

Searcey's dad was a student at Nebraska about the time coach "Biff" Jones directed the team to the Rose Bowl, and "he talked about all those players while I was growing up," Searcey said.

Oh yes, one of his uncles was given the nickname "Choppy" for former Cornhusker John "Choppy" Rhodes, "who used to help on the farm when my dad was little," he said.

Rhodes lettered from 1923 to 1925 and served as an assistant coach in 1928.

Searcey saw his first game at Memorial Stadium in the early 1970s.

And he was hooked. He turned down scholarship offers from small colleges in the state and walked on at Nebraska.

He played in the Shrine Bowl all-star game and met some of his future Cornhusker teammates, including Ric Lindquist, a defensive back from Plattsmouth who also walked on. They played on the Nebraska freshman team, as nearly everyone did, then redshirted, also as most did.

The first spring, in particular, was intimidating, according to Searcey. "Every now and then you'd get called up to practice with the varsity, and you got a little nervous," he said.

The older defensive backs contributed to that nervousness, "pimping you around, telling you how hard it was going to be. You'd be half-scared, and they'd laugh after they left you."

Jim Pillen, a junior when he was a freshman, "was a father to us all," Searcey said. "He took care of us. He was a great guy. He said, 'Hey, it'll be all right. Hang in there.'"

Searcey hung in there until late in

his junior season, when he suffered a serious knee injury. Surgery to repair a damaged anterior cruciate ligament was rare at the time. Often, an ACL wouldn't even be repaired, according to Searcey. But his was. He underwent surgery in November of 1980.

Because of the rehabilitation, he couldn't participate in winter conditioning. And he continued to have problems in spring practice. About two weeks into the spring, he was told to "shut it down."

That's when he turned to coaching.

He went to Osborne and asked if he could help. He served as a graduate assistant for a spring and one full season. Instead of working with the freshman team, he worked with Bob Thornton, who replaced Lance Van Zandt as the varsity defensive backs coach in 1981.

Van Zandt also served as defensive coordinator, after coming from Kansas in 1977. Van Zandt was a Texan, and a character. "We still tell Lance Van Zandt stories," said Searcey.

"That's all we talk about when we (defensive backs) get together."

Van Zandt's defensive philosophy,

colorfully expressed, wasn't complicated. "Lance just said, 'Go knock his socks off.' And if you didn't, you were on the bench," Searcey said.

He could have continued as a graduate assistant, with the possibility of moving up. But he was getting married and decided that the demands on coaching were such that he needed to consider another career.

And contacts he made through his association with the football program helped in that.

"I was really torn whether to stay or not," he said. Craig Bohl and Tony Samuel, who also had been graduate assistants with him, remained in coaching, while he went to work for a Lincoln bank.

The first few years were difficult. "Every fall, I said, 'What am I doing here in a business suit and tie?' The rest is history. I stayed in banking and I stayed in Lincoln," said Searcey.

Still, if Osborne were to call tomorrow...

"Boy, there would be a big part of me that would be tugging," Searcey said. "It must almost be like a drug or something; you get that high. You must always want to kind of do it." ■

You are the Star!

reclaim CD
get your name in
the game

**Announcers call out
your fan's FULL
NAME 16 times as the
hero for the Huskers.
Includes all the sound
effects (Tunnel Walk,
fight song, etc.). 10
thrilling minutes.
Goose bumps are
guaranteed!**

**Choose from 5
Husker sports. Plus
45 NCAA teams,
NFL, MLB and
NASCAR now
available.**

**Order Toll Free
1.800.524.9527**

**GREAT
GIFT**

**\$24.95
FREE
SHIPPING**

**I'M THE STAR
FOR THE
Huskers**



Nebraska 32

Michigan 28

Coach Bill Callahan and captains Cory Ross (4) and Daniel Bullocks (14) lead the celebration after the trophy presentation. (Photo by Scott Bruhn)



'We Just Stepped Up'

After watching Michigan-Ohio State videotape, Huskers knew it could be done

STORIES BY MIKE BABCOCK

PHOTOS BY SCOTT BRUHN

Nebraska trailed 28-17 with 8:50 remaining. But the Cornhuskers had the ball at the Michigan 38-yard line following Cortney Grixby's 28-yard punt return. They also had a belief that they could win, despite the circumstances. Coach Bill Callahan reinforced that belief earlier in the day.

Before players boarded buses for the Alamodome, Callahan showed them videotape of the fourth quarter of Michigan's 25-21 loss against arch-rival Ohio State in the regular-season finale at Ann Arbor. The Wolverines had taken a 21-12 lead with 7:49 remaining in that game.

Callahan said he wanted to "illustrate to them (his players) a couple of things that we identified on film in terms of what we could anticipate at crunch time. We really felt that if we took them (the Wolverines) into the fourth quarter, we would have a real shot to beat them late in the game."

How The Game Turned

The screening proved prophetic. On the second play after Grixby's punt return, Cory Ross ran 31 yards for a touchdown, and Zac Taylor passed to Todd Peterson for a two-point conversion.

A little more than 2 minutes later, Nebraska scored again on a 13-yard, Taylor-to-Terrence-Nunn pass and Jordan Congdon's extra-point kick. The possession was set up by defensive tackle Ola Dagunduro, who scooped up a fumble, forced by safety Blake Tiedtke, and returned it 13 yards to the Michigan 17.

After watching the Michigan-Ohio State videotape, "we knew exactly what was going on," said Taylor. "We knew it

NUMBERS

Nebraska finished the season rated 24th in both major polls.

24



Senior I-back Cory Ross rushed for 161 yards, 31 coming on a key fourth-quarter touchdown run.

could be done. We just stepped up."

The Cornhuskers prepared for a four-quarter game, and "we thought we were in great condition. We've been in great condition all year, so we knew we were going to finish strong," Taylor said. "We didn't know how they'd come out in the fourth quarter. But we knew we were in peak condition and they weren't going to do better than us."

Neither team was a stranger to close games. Two of Michigan's victories were by three points in overtime, and its four losses were by a combined 17 points, while two of Nebraska's victories went down to the final play and another went two overtimes. "We've been in those situations so

pped Up'



many times this year," Cornhusker defensive coordinator Kevin Cosgrove said. "So our kids didn't quit."

The defense was relentless down the stretch. Michigan's possession following the Ross touchdown lasted only one play because strongside linebacker Adam Ickes forced a fumble, which middle linebacker Corey McKeon recovered near mid-field. The Wolverines managed to hold, but only briefly.

Ross was asked the level of concern on the Nebraska sideline when Michigan took the 28-17 lead. "I really didn't have any," he said. "I'm pretty sure — I was watching the sideline — no one else did (either). We played this season as all-day fighters, all year long. And we felt that we're a four-quarter team."

"We showed that tonight." ■

WHAT WORKED? WHAT DIDN'T?

RUSHING OFFENSE

The running game was as productive as it had been all season, and it proved to be the difference. The productivity was a function of the scheme, which stretched the Michigan defense. The Wolverines "were so big, we wanted to see if they could run a little bit," said I-back Cory Ross. In addition, "the o-line, they just had holes in there, creases in there, and I was finding them." ★★☆☆

PASSING OFFENSE

Zac Taylor took a physical pounding. What else is new? He was sacked five times and threw interceptions on consecutive passes in the first half; Michigan converted the second into seven points. But Taylor also threw for three touchdowns, a winning performance. "I was just a little off there for a little bit," he said. "It happens. I knew we could bounce back." ★★☆☆

RUSHING DEFENSE

The Wolverines weren't able to establish a consistent threat on the ground (3 yards per carry wasn't going to cut it) against Le Kevin Smith (six tackles, three for losses) and company, much to the chagrin of coach Lloyd Carr. "We have to be able to run the football," he said. "We haven't been able to do that going back to the Wisconsin game." ★★☆☆

PASSING DEFENSE

Michigan quarterback Chad Henne threw for three touchdowns and 270 yards, but the Blackshirts sacked him four times. Cornerback Zack Bowman made two big plays in the second half, with an interception in the end zone and a pass break-up at his own 2-yard line on fourth down with 2:34 remaining in the game. "It was a good game for me, a big challenge," said Bowman. ★★☆☆

SPECIAL TEAMS

Punter Sam Koch was his usual, reliable self, and though Steve Breaston's kick and punt returns were a concern, the Cornhusker special teams responded in the face of adversity. By late in the game, seven members of the kickoff team were sidelined by injury, and "we were playing anybody we could," coach Bill Callahan said. "They gave their hearts and souls." ★★☆☆

Who Stood Out?

OFFENSE

Cornhusker fans chanted "Cory, Cory" when Cory Ross was named the offensive player of the game. The senior I-back rushed for 161 yards, the second most in Alamo Bowl history — behind Nebraska's Dan Alexander, who ran for 240 yards in the 2000 game. Ross also had a history of Alamo Bowl success, carrying a bowl- and school-record 37 times in the 2003 victory against Michigan State.

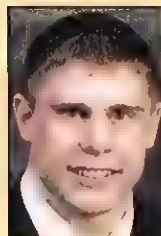


Cory Ross

"I think something's in the air down here, maybe because my momma's from Texas," said Ross, who raced 31 yards for the touchdown that cut the deficit to 28-25 with 8:08 remaining. "I don't know what it is, man. I think I might have to move down here."

DEFENSE

Sophomore linebacker Corey McKeon contributed 11 tackles and countless well-chosen words, a.k.a. trash-talking. "I did my best to jaw without the refs hearing me," he said, explaining that he wanted to "try and get in their (Wolverines') heads enough so they knew that we were going to be there all day, (that) we weren't going to move, we were going to play them until the last inch. And we did that."



Corey McKeon

Nebraska won because of a team effort. "It seems with our team, the harder and harder it gets, the more and more we come together, offense and defense alike," McKeon said. "As times start going hard, we pull together. That's what the great teams do. It's not about offense, defense, who's the best player on the field. It comes down to togetherness, being able to fight."

SPECIAL TEAMS

When bowl preparation began, senior punter Sam Koch was awarded a black practice jersey. "We've been pondering (it) in our minds as a staff for a while; he's done such a great job for us, keeping opponents backed up, giving them a long field," said defensive coordinator Kevin Cosgrove.



Sam Koch

"I know the offense looks at him as an offensive player, but I just thought our defense should recognize him for everything he's done this year."

Koch finished strong, averaging 51.5 yards on eight punts. His season's average, 46.51, was a school record. The previous record of 45.12 was set by All-American Kyle Larson in 2003. Koch had five punts of 50 yards or more in the game, and 28 for the season.





Key plays were numerous in the Alamo Bowl, capped by the game's final play (top left), which included a pass from Michigan wide receiver Steve Breaston (15), before he could be tackled by NU's Corey McKeon (13). Nebraska safety Blake Tiedtke (25, bottom left) swatted the football away from Wolverine quarterback Chad Henne (7) to set up the game-winning touchdown drive. The Huskers cut the margin to 28-25 when Zac Taylor completed a two-point conversion pass to Todd Peterson (17, above), who won a battle for the football with Michigan's Leon Hall.

NEBRASKA-MICHIGAN NOTES

BRANDENBURGH STEPS UP

Sophomore Lance Brandenburg got his first start at weakside linebacker and immediately made his presence felt with a big hit on wide receiver Mario Manningham on the Wolverines' third play from scrimmage. "I had the utmost faith in Lance," defensive coordinator Kevin Cosgrove said.

"I knew he would play well; he played very well."

The opportunity to start was a result of sophomore Bo Ruud's having suffered a broken right arm during practice a week and a half before the game. The injury occurred with only four plays remaining in the practice. Ruud was the team's second-leading tackler this season.

"It's the same thing we tell all our kids. They're always one play away. You've got to have a starter's mentality whether you're a back-up or not," said Cosgrove.

Ruud was the third starting linebacker to be sidelined by injury this season, following Steve Octavien, whom he replaced on the weakside, and Stewart Bradley on the strongside.

Bradley's successor, senior Adam Ickes, played despite shoulder and groin problems. Pre-game rumor had it that Ickes would see only limited action. The rumor proved to be unfounded. "We were certainly thin at that position (linebacker)," Cosgrove said. "I can't be more proud of the linebacker group and our defense as a whole. Every kid that has gone in there has really stepped up."

Brandenburg finished with six tackles, including another that drew reaction from the crowd because of its violence. The first one on Manningham "sure gave him a lot of confidence," said Cosgrove.

"Lance, he's a physical guy. He can run."

The defense also was without senior end Wali Muhammad, who was suspended for an unspecified violation of team rules, and sophomore end Dontrell Moore, who was ruled ineligible. Senior wide receiver Shamus McKoy was suspended as well.

GREAT VIEWERSHIP

Nebraska-Michigan was the most-watched college football game in the history of the ESPN cable television network. The 5.41 rating translated into 7.8 million viewers. The previous high was 7.29 million viewers for Nebraska's game against Arizona in the 1998 Holiday Bowl. ESPN's most-watched regular-season game was between Florida State and Miami in 1994, attracting 7.17 viewers.

Attendance was 62,016, the fifth largest in Alamo Bowl history and the second largest for a game involving two out-of-state teams. A record 65,380 attended the 1999 Penn State-Texas A&M game, while the largest attendance for two non-Texas teams was 65,265 — Ohio State-Oklahoma State.

HOMEcoming

Cornhusker sophomore safety Titus Brothers attended San Antonio's Judson High School, which won the Texas Class 5A championship when he was a senior. The title game, in which Judson defeated Midland on a 76-yard touchdown pass with 7 seconds remaining, was played at the Alamodome. Brothers was a freshman redshirt when Nebraska defeated Michigan State in the 2003 Alamo Bowl game.

Brothers said he had played in the Alamodome "at least seven times," and has yet to lose.

AWARDS RECAP

I-back Cory Ross, who was playing his final game at Nebraska, was chosen as the game's offensive MVP. He rushed for 161 yards on 28 carries. Two years ago, in the Cornhuskers' 17-3 victory against Michigan State in the Alamo Bowl, he rushed for 138 yards on a record 37 carries.

Coach Bill Callahan was profuse in his praise of Ross. "He had some runs where there weren't any holes," said Callahan. "I love



NU linebacker Lance Brandenburg takes down Michigan wide receiver Mario Manningham.

Cory Ross. I love everything about him as a person."

Michigan junior cornerback Lorenzo Hall, who intercepted two passes, was the game's defensive MVP, and Wolverine senior Steve Breaston, who set Alamo Bowl records for the longest return and most total kickoff return yards, received the Fred Jacoby Sportsmanship Award.

HERIAN RETURNS

Tight end Matt Herian, who missed the season while rehabilitating a fractured left leg, was able to

participate in bowl practices on a limited basis. He wore a green jersey and wasn't involved in contact work. He is expected to return for spring practice.

"He functioned pretty smoothly," Callahan said after his first practices. "He's just getting back in a groove, trying to get that feel back that he hasn't had for a long time."

RANDS LEAVES

True freshman cornerback Robert Rands left the team in early December in order to focus on track and field. "He has Olympic dreams and that type of potential," Callahan said in making the announcement. "I certainly don't want to hinder him from that aspect. We give him our blessing. I hate to see him go. He's a tremendous young man. We're going to follow him closely and wish him the best of luck."



Scott Downing

DOWNING DONE

The game was Scott Downing's last as the Cornhuskers' tight ends coach and recruiting coordinator. Downing is now the head coach at Northern Colorado. Finishing with a victory was "awesome," Downing said. "But I'm more pleased for the seniors and the kids on the team. Those are the guys that are important. It's all about the kids to me, and I'm just happy for those guys because they've worked their tails off. The seniors, and all the team, have persevered through a lot of adversity the last couple of years.

"It's nice to be leaving the program on an upswing."

HERE AND THERE

● Ross finished his Cornhusker career with 2,743 rushing yards. He ranks ninth on the all-time list, just 2 yards behind Dahrran Diedrick (1999-02).

● Ross caught three passes (for 8 yards) to bring his season's total to 43 receptions, a record for a Nebraska running back. The previous record was 41, by Jeff Kinney in 1969.

● McKeon was credited with 11 tackles, equaling his career high and giving him 98 for the season. He also had three tackles-for-loss. His 22 this season were the second-most in school history. The Cornhusker record for tackles-for-loss is 25, set by defensive tackle Jim Skow in 1985.

● Redshirted freshman Nate Swift caught three passes for 31 yards and a touchdown, his seventh of the season and the most by a Cornhusker since 1992, when tight end Gerald Armstrong caught seven. Swift finished the season with a freshman-record 45 catches.

● Junior quarterback Zac Taylor completed 14-of-31 passes for 167 yards to increase his school single-season record to 2,653 yards. His three touchdown passes brought his season's total to 19, including two or more in eight of the last nine games.

● The Cornhuskers' four sacks gave them 50 for the season, three shy of the school record, set in 1999. Le Kevin Smith, Ola Dagunduro, Barry Cryer and Blake Tiedtke were credited with the sacks.

● True freshman Jordan Congdon's 20-yard field goal in the third quarter was his 19th of the season, a Nebraska record. Kris Brown set the previous record of 18 in 1997. ■

GAME STATS

SCORING

Dec. 28, 2005
Alamodome San Antonio, Texas
Attendance 62,000

	1	2	3	4	F
Michigan	7	7	7	7	28
Nebraska	7	7	3	15	32

First Quarter

	M	NU
NU Nunn Pass from Taylor 52-yards (Congdon Kick) 08:04	0	7
Drive: 4 plays 73 yds 1:19		

M Ecker Pass from Henne 13-yards (Rivas Kick) 05:48	7	7
Drive: 5 plays 30 yds 2:16		

Second Quarter

M Massey Pass from Henne 16-yards (Rivas Kick) 11:43	14	7
Drive: 3 plays 28 yds 0:50		

NU Swift Pass from Taylor 14-yards (Congdon Kick) 02:37	14	14
Drive: 7 plays 70 yds 2:40		

Third Quarter

NU Congdon 20-yard Field Goal 08:54	14	17
Drive: 12 plays 62 yds 4:34		

M Manningham Pass from Henne 21-yards (Rivas Kick) 06:31	21	17
Drive: 6 plays 58 yds 2:23		

Fourth Quarter

M Henne 7-yard Run (Rivas Kick) 11:40	28	17
Drive: 8 plays 53 yds 3:12		

NU Ross 31-yard Run (Peterson Pass Good) 08:08	28	25
Drive: 2 plays 38 yds 0:42		

NU Nunn Pass from Taylor 13-yards (Congdon Kick) 04:29	28	32
Drive: 3 plays 17 yds 1:27		

TEAM STATS

	M	NU
Total First Downs	23	16
Rushing	10	7
Passing	11	6
Penalty	2	3
Rushing Attempts	42	37
Yards Gained Rushing	162	185
Yards Lost Rushing	32	34
Net Yards Rushing	130	151
Net Yards Passing	270	167
Passes Attempted	43	31
Passes Completed	21	14
Had Intercepted	1	2
Percent Completion	48.8%	45.2%
Yards per Attempt	6.3	5.4
Yards per Completion	12.9	11.9
Total Offensive Plays	85	68
Total Net Yards	400	318
Avg. Gain Per Play	4.7	4.7
Fumbles: No-Lost	4-2	0-0
Penalties: No-Yards	6-49	9-76
Punts: No-Yards	7-244	8-412
Avg. Per Punt	34.9	51.5
Avg. Net Punt	30.3	42.5
Punt Returns: No-Yards	7-72	3-32
Kickoff Returns: No-Yards	6-186	2-43
Interception Returns: No-Yards	2-0	1-0
Fumble Returns: No-Yards	0-0	2-16
Miscellaneous Yards	0	0
Possession Time	31:21	28:39
Third-Down Conversions	5-17	4-16
Percentage	29.4%	25.0%
Fourth-Down Conversions	1-2	0-1
Percentage	50.0%	0.0%
Sacks By: No-Yards	5-27	4-22



Terrence Nunn gets past Michigan's Brandon Harrison for one of his two touchdowns.

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

MICHIGAN

	No	Gain	Lost	Net	Avg	TD	Lg
Hart	19	83	9	74	3.9	0	18
Henne	13	58	20	38	2.9	1	14
Grady	5	17	0	17	3.4	0	7
Bass	3	4	0	4	1.3	0	2
Team	1	0	1	-1	-1.0	0	0
Breaston	1	0	2	-2	-2.0	0	0
Total	42	162	32	130	3.1	1	18

	Att	Comp	%	Int	Yds	TD	Lg
Henne	43	21	48.8	1	270	3	26
Total	43	21	48.8	1	270	3	26

	No	Yds	TD	Lg
Avant	8	71	0	26
Ecker	1	71	1	13
Hart	2	35	0	18
Manningham	3	28	1	21
Bass	3	24	0	12
Massey	2	18	1	16
Bradley	1	15	0	15
Breaston	1	8	0	8
Total	21	270	3	26

	No	Yds	TD	Lg
Breaston	7	72	0	25
Total	7	72	0	25

	No	Yds	TD	Lg
Breaston	4	146	0	69
Tabb	1	30	0	30
Thompson	1	10	0	10
Total	6	186	0	69

	No	Avg	Lg	Bk	TD	FC	50+	In	20
Ryan	7	34.9	44	0	0	2	0	0	1
Total	7	34.9	44	0	0	2	0	0	1

	Made	Att	Lg	Bkld
Rivas	0	1	0	0
Total	0	1	0	0

	Solo	Asst	Tot	TFL	Sack	PD	FF	FR
Barringer	5	4	9	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Branch	4	4	8	5-16	1.5-11	0	0	0
Harris	4	4	8	2-10	0.5-9	0	0	0
Mason	4	2	6	0-0	0-0	1	0	0
Burgess	2	2	4	0-0	0-0	2	0	0
Hall	2	2	4	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Watson	2	2	4	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Harrison	2	1	3	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Woodley	2	1	3	1-5	0.5-5	1	0	0
Woods	1	2	3	3-9	0.5-5	0	0	0
Adams	1	1	2	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Crabbe	2	0	2	1-7	1-7	1	0	0
Graham	2	0	2	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Massey	1	1	2	0-0	0-0	0	0	0

	No	Yds	TD	Lg
Hall	2	0	0	0
Total	2	0	0	0

NEBRASKA

	No	Gain	Lost	Net	Avg	TD	Lg
Ross	28	165	4	161	5.8	1	31
Lucky	1	3	0	3	3.0	0	3
Team	1	0	3	-3	-3.0	0	0
Taylor	7	17	27	-10	-1.4	0	12
Total	37	185	34	151	4.1	1	31

	Att	Comp	%	Int	Yds	TD	Lg
Taylor	31	14	45.2	2	167	3	52
Total	31	14	45.2	2	167	3	52

	No	Yds	TD	Lg
Nunn	4	91	2	52
Swift	3	31	1	14
Hardy	3	27	0	13
Phillips	1	10	0	10
Ross	3	8	0	6
Total	14	167	3	52

	No	Yds	TD	Lg
Grixby	2	30	0	28
Nunn	1	2	0	2
Total	3	32	0	28

	No	Yds	TD	Lg
Lucky	2	43	0	24
Total	2	43	0	24

	No	Avg	Lg	Bk	TD	FC	50+	In	20
S Koch	8	51.5	59	0	1	0	5	1	1
Total	8	51.5	59	0	1	0	5	1	1

	Made	Att	Lg	Bkld
Congdon	1	1	20	0
Total	1	1	20	0

	Solo	Asst	Tot	TFL	Sack	PD	FF	FR
McKeon	9	2	11	3-8	0-0	0	0	1
Bullocks	7	1	8	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Brandenburg	4	2	6	0-0	0-0	1	0	0
Grixby	6	0	6	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Ickes	3	3	6	0-0	0-0	0	1	0
Smith	4	2	6	3-5	1-2	0	0	0
J Moore	2	2	4	0-0	0-0	1	0	0
Tiedtke	4	0	4	2-8	1-6	1	1	0
Dagunduro	3	0	3	1-6	1-6	0	0	1
Brothers	2	0	2	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Dillard	2	0	2	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Eisenhart	2	0	2	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Shanle	2	0	2	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Todd	2	0	2	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Adams	0	1	1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Bowman	0	1	1	0-0	0-0	2	0	0
Carrier	1	0	1	0-0	0-0	1	0	0
Cryer	1	0	1	1-8	1-8	0	0	0
Erickson	1	0	1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Jackson	1	0	1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Rigoni	1	0	1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Souder	1	0	1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Turner	1	0	1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0

	No	Yds	TD	Lg
Bowman	1	0	0	0
Total	1	0	0	0

2005 RESULTS

1	Sept. 3	Maine (5-6), W 25-7	1-0
2	Sept. 10	Wake Forest (4-7), W 31-3	2-0
3	Sept. 17	Pittsburgh (5-6), W 7-6	3-0
4	Oct. 1	Iowa St. (4-4/7-4), W 27-20, 2 ot	1-0/4-0
5	Oct. 8	Texas Tech (6-2/9-2), L 34-31	1-1/4-1
6	Oct. 15	@Baylor (2-6/5-6), W 23-14	2-1/5-1
7	Oct. 22	@Missouri (4-4/6-5), L 41-24	2-2/5-2
8	Oct. 29	Oklahoma (6-2/7-4), L 31-24	2-3/5-3
9	Nov. 5	@Kansas (3-5/6-5), L 40-15	2-4/5-4
10	Nov. 12	Kansas State (2-8/5-6), W 27-25	3-4/6-4
11	Nov. 25	@Colorado (5-3/7-4), W 30-3	4-4/7-4
12	Dec. 28	vs. Michigan (7-4), W 32-28 (Alamo Bowl)	4-4/8-4

2005 SEASON STATS

RUSHING					
Name	G	Att.	Yds.	YPG	TD
Ross	12	225	882	73.5	5
Glenn	7	45	131	18.7	4
Lucky	12	43	129	10.8	0
B. Jackson	9	18	52	5.8	0
Nunn	12	2	23	1.9	0
Green	11	1	8	.7	0
Stuntz	5	1	4	0.8	0
Beck	2	1	-7	-3.5	0
Team	7	7	-26	-4.1	0
Taylor	12	76	41	-3.4	1

PASSING					
Name	G	C-A-I	Pct.	Yds.	TD
Taylor	12	237-430-12	55.1	2,653	19
Beck	2	1-10-1	10.0	21	0
Ross	12	1-2-0	50.0	18	1
Peterson	10	0-1-0	0.0	0	0
Nunn	12	0-1-0	0.0	0	0

RECEIVING					
Name	G	No.	Yds.	YPC	TD
Swift	12	45	641	14.2	53.4
Nunn	12	43	495	11.5	41.2
Ross	12	43	392	9.1	32.7
Mulkey	12	26	271	10.4	22.6
Hardy	12	25	349	14.0	29.1
Phillips	12	15	108	7.2	9.0
M. LeFlora	9	10	98	9.8	10.9
Peterson	10	9	150	16.7	15.0
Todd	12	8	75	9.4	6.2
Sievers	12	6	39	6.5	3.2
Fluellen	4	4	52	13.0	13.0
Lucky	12	2	3	1.5	0.2
Mueller	12	1	18	18.0	1.5
B. Jackson	9	1	6	5.0	0.6
Taylor	12	1	-4	-4.0	-0.3

FIELD GOALS			
Name	Att.	Good	Long
Congdon	23	19	41

PUNTING				
Name	No.	Yds.	Avg.	LNG
S. Koch	71	3,302	46.5	84

PUNT RETURNS					
Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG	TD
Grixby	31	333	10.4	48	0
Nunn	16	293	18.3	62	0
Bullocks	1	16	16.0	16	0
Team	1	2	2.0	2	0
Green	0	3	0.0	3	0

KICKOFF RETURNS					
Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG	TD
Lucky	15	313	20.9	57	0
Green	9	223	24.8	45	0
B. Jackson	6	63	10.5	27	0
Phillips	1	12	12.0	12	0

DEFENSE									
Name	G	UT	AT	TT	FL	Int.	S/Yds.		
McKeon	12	61	37	98	22-89	3-57	7-51		
Bullocks	12	46	37	83	4-8	1-12	0-0		
Ruud	11	41	39	80	14-44	1-27	2.5-20		
Tiedtke	12	38	30	68	6-26	1-28	4-24		
Adams	12	26	24	50	5-15	0-0	1.5-12		
Grixby	12	38	8	46	0-0	1-0	0-0		
Carriker	12	26	17	43	17-96	0-0	9.5-84		
Smith	12	23	20	43	13-54	1-14	6-35		
Ickes	12	20	17	37	5-8	1-0	0-0		
J. Moore	12	19	18	37	14-50	1-6	3-25		
Green	12	19	10	29	0-0	0-0	0-0		
Bowman	11	24	3	27	1-1	2-0	0-0		
Bradley	5	11	15	26	5-27	1-43	3-25		
Brandenburgh	8	15	8	23	5-10	0-0	0-0		
Dagunduro	12	13	9	22	4-15	0	2-12		

Muhammad	11	13	7	20	8-41	0-0	4-33
Rigonis	12	8	7	15	1-18	0	0-0
Turner	12	13	1	13	7-48	0	6-46
Eisenhart	12	8	4	12	0-0	0	0-0
Robison	12	4	8	12	0-0	0	0-0
Dillard	11	7	4	11	1-2	0	0-0
Shanley	12	5	5	10	0-0	0	0-0
Fisher	12	6	2	8	0-0	0	0-0
Todd	12	5	2	7	0-0	0	0-0
Souder	10	1	5	6	0-0	0	0-0
Cryer	12	4	2	6	4-16	0	1.5-14
Steinkuhler	8	2	3	5	2-0	0	0-0
Erickson	10	3	1	4	0-0	0	0-0
Brothers	10	2	2	4	0-0	0	0-0
Octavian	1	3	1	4	2-5	0	0-0
D. Moore	11	1	2	3	0-0	0	0-0
L. Jackson	9	1	1	2	0-0	0	0-0
Ross	12	2	0	2	0-0	0	0-0
Potter	12	0	1	1	0-0	0	0-0
Luhrs	4	0	1	1	0-0	0	0-0
Suh	2	0	1	1	0-0	0	0-0
Stuntz	5	0	1	1	0-0	0	0-0
Mueller	12	1	0	1	0-0	0	0-0
Sievers	12	1	0	1	0-0	0	0-0
Phillips	12	1	0	1	0-0	0	0-0
Mulkey	12	1	0	1	0-0	0	0-0
Mann	12	1	0	1	0-0	0	0-0
S. Koch	12	1	0	1	0-0	0	0-0
Beck	2	1	0	1	0-0	0	0-0
Taylor	12	1	0	1	0-0	0	0-0

TEAM STATISTICS			NU	OPP
Scoring			296	252
Points per Game			24.7	21.0
First Downs			221	217
Rushing			71	85
Passing			124	111
Penalty			26	21
Rushing Yards			1,152	1,491
Yards Gained Rushing			1,551	2,055
Yards Lost Rushing			399	564
Rushing Attempts			420	459
Avg per Rush			2.7	3.2
Avg per Game			96.0	124.2
TDs Rushing			10	14
Passing Yards			2,692	2,495
Att-Comp-Int			444-239-13	415-212-13
Avg per Pass			6.1	6.0
Avg per Catch			11.3	11.8
Avg per Game			224.3	207.9
TDs Passing			20	13
Total Offense			3,844	3,986
Total Plays			864	874
Avg per Play			4.4	4.6
Avg per Game			320.3	332.2
Kick Returns-Yards			31 611	47 862
Punt Returns-Yards			50-647	31-273
Interception Returns-Yards			13 187	13 209
Kick Return Avg			19.7	18.3
Punt Return Avg			12.9	8.8
Interception Return Avg			14.4	16.1
Fumbles-Lost			27-11	31-9
Penalties-Yards			89-693	85-719
Average Per Game			67.8	59.9
Punts-Yards			72-3,302	80 3,425
Average Per Punt			45.9	42.8
Net punt average			39.8	33.5
Time of Possession/Game			29:56	30:04
Third-Down Conversions			60-182	56-191
Percentage			33%	29%
Fourth-Down Conversions			7-19	13-21
Percentage			37%	62%
Sacks By: No-Yards			50-381	38-253
Touchdowns Scored			34	30
Field Goals-Attempts			19-23	13-25
PAT Attempts			31-32	27-29

Scoring						
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	OT	TOT
Nebraska	49	98	67	68	14	296
Opponents	72	53	63	57	7	252



Nebraska's captains Cory Ross (left) and Daniel Bullocks hoist the Alamo Bowl trophy after the Huskers' 32-28 victory over Michigan Dec. 28 in San Antonio.

Big 12 At A Glance

FINAL STANDINGS

North		All	
Conf.			
Colorado	5 3	7 6	
Nebraska	4 4	8 4	
Iowa State	4 4	7 5	
Missouri	4 4	7 5	
Kansas	3 5	7 5	
Kansas State	2 6	5 6	

South		All	
Conf.			
Texas	9 0	13 0	
Texas Tech	6 2	9 3	
Oklahoma	6 2	8 4	
Texas A&M	3 5	5 6	
Baylor	2 6	5 6	
Oklahoma State	1 7	4 7	

BOWL RESULTS

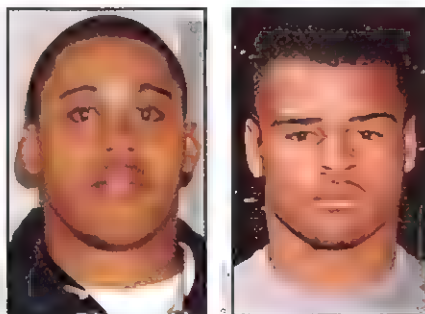
Fort Worth Bowl	
Fort Worth, Texas	
Kansas 42, Houston 13	
Champs Sports Bowl	
Orlando, Fla.	
Clemson 19, Colorado 10	
Alamo Bowl	
San Antonio, Texas	
Nebraska 32, Michigan 28	
Holiday Bowl	
San Diego, Calif.	
Oklahoma 17, Oregon 14	
Independence Bowl	
Shreveport, La.	
Missouri 38, South Carolina 31	
Houston Bowl	
Houston, Texas	
TCU 27, Iowa State 24	
Cotton Bowl	
Dallas, Texas	
Alabama 13, Texas Tech 10	
Rose Bowl	
Pasadena, Calif.	
Texas 41, USC 38	

Coaches Working to Complete Class

Dry spell ends with commitment from lineman

By Doug Horwich

With the Huskers' 2006 recruiting class in its final stages of completion, the team's list of viable prospects has diminished considerably. Nebraska continues to wait on decisions from a number of official visitors dating back to September,



Offensive lineman Keith Williams (left) and athlete Ricky Thenarse committed to Nebraska in early January.

and the Huskers will continue to host visitors throughout January.

After going roughly a month without a commitment, Nebraska finally

ended the dry spell, receiving a commitment from offensive lineman/defensive tackle Keith Williams (6-foot-5, 310 pounds, 5.4-second 40-yard dash) from McCluer North High School in Florissant, Mo.

Williams chose Nebraska over Indiana and Minnesota and is a versatile player who could end up on either side of the football. He has the frame to play offensive tackle, but could also end up at offensive guard or defensive tackle.

Williams visited Lincoln in mid-December and really liked what he saw. "It's Nebraska, you know? It's just a special, special place," he said. He was hosted by freshman wide

NEBRASKA COMMITMENTS FOR 2006

Player	Hometown (school)	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	40
Pierre Allen	Denver, Colo. (Thomas Jefferson)	DE	6-5	222	4.6
Steve Allen	Fresno, Calif. (Fresno City College)	LB	6-2	230	4.5
Cruz Barrett	Daytona Beach, Fla. (Mainland)	OL	6-4	314	5.41
*Victory Haines	Ephraim, Utah (Snow College)	OL	6-7	285	5.1
Ricky Henry	Omaha, Neb. (Burke)	OL	6-3	295	5.2
Menelik Holt	San Diego, Calif. (St. Augustine)	WR	6-3	210	4.78
Seth Jensen	Fort Morgan, Colo.	DT	6-3	275	4.9
Brandon Johnson	Compton, Calif. (Compton CC)	DT	6-3	312	4.8
Andre Jones	Fresno, Calif. (Fresno City College)	DB	6-0	192	4.4
D.J. Jones	Omaha, Neb. (Central)	OL	6-6	300	5.0
Ben Martin	Lincoln, Neb. (Southwest)	DE	6-4	232	5.2
Mike McNeill	Kirkwood, Mo.	TE	6-4	215	4.65
Carl Nicks	Salinas, Calif. (Hartnell CC)	OL	6-6	320	5.0
*Ashlee Palmer	Compton, Calif. (Compton CC)	DB	6-3	215	4.4
Maurice Purify	San Francisco, Calif. (City College)	WR	6-4	210	4.45
Mike Smith	Las Vegas, Nev. (Palo Verde)	DE/TE	6-6	245	4.75
Ricky Thenarse	Los Angeles, Calif. (Jordan)	ATH	6-0	175	4.48
Anthony West	San Diego, Calif. (Point Loma)	ATH	6-0	195	4.56
Keith Williams	Florissant, Mo. (McCluer North)	OL	6-5	310	5.4
Kenny Wilson	Liberal, Kan. (Butler County CC)	RB	6-0	220	4.4
Corey Young	Omaha, Neb. (Millard North)	DB	6-0	194	4.45

*Signed letter of intent

For more daily recruiting information, visit HuskersIllustrated.com, a member of the Rivals.com network.

receiver Chris Brooks, another St. Louis-area player. "I haven't seen him for a while, so it was good to catch up with him and spend time talking about how things are up there and how he feels about things," Williams said. "He told me he really likes it and said it was a great place to play football, go to school and live."

Williams was also able to get to know some of the Husker coaches. "I spent quite a bit of time with coach Coz (defensive coordinator Kevin Cosgrove), and I have to tell you, he's just a great, great man," Williams said. "We went over to his house and ate and just hung out with some of the other players. I enjoy being around him because he's like one of the players, you know?"

Williams said he also felt that he bonded with the other visitors and with players on the team. "I spent time with a lot of them and bonded real well with all of them," he said. "The whole trip was real nice, and my dad and I both enjoyed and liked what we saw."

Williams also had a chance to spend some quality time with head coach Bill Callahan. "I spent a lot of time with him, too," he said, "and he told me I need to come there and be a part of something special. I liked him and what he had to say about what's going on and the direction they want to take the football program."

A good day on the recruiting front became even better when the Huskers received a commitment later that day from safety prospect Ricky Thenarse (6-0, 175, 4.48) from Jordan High School in Los Angeles, Calif.

"I like everything about Nebraska," Thenarse said. "I'm going in as a safety and corner. I may also return punts and kicks."

Thenarse earned first-team all-city honors and was his league's Player of the Year after rushing for 1,344 yards and 10 touchdowns. He led the team in receptions with 19 for 628 yards and five receiving touchdowns.

As a special teams player he returned 11 punts for 231 yards and 14 kickoffs for 300 yards.

On the defensive side of the ball, Thenarse racked up a team leading 153 tackles and one interception.

Before making his decision, Thenarse said Nebraska and Fresno State were in a dead heat, one having

RECRUITING NOTES

An Early Start on 2007 Class

By Rick Shaw

The Nebraska football team finished the 2005 season in impressive fashion, with a win over Michigan in the Alamo Bowl. Less than a week later, the Husker coaching staff celebrated a victory on the recruiting front.

Niles Paul, listed as one of the top 100 junior prospects in the country by Rivals.com, delivered his pledge to Nebraska coaches on Jan. 2. The 6-foot-1, 200-pound wide receiver/defensive back from Omaha, Neb. (North) became the Huskers' first commitment for the Class of 2007.

Paul, the nephew of former Husker standout and current Green Bay Packer Ahman Green, said that Nebraska's performance in the Alamo Bowl helped speed up his decision.

"I was watching the game, and I was just so excited about what I saw," Paul said. "I called my uncle Ahman (Green) during the game, and we talked about it, and I called up coach (Scott) Downing and said 'I want to be a Husker.'"

Paul posted impressive numbers on both sides of the ball as a junior. He led the Vikings with 32 catches for 623 yards and 10 touchdowns. On defense, he had 40 tackles, three interceptions and one fumble recovery. He also averaged 25.6 yards on kick returns and 9.8 yards on punt returns.

"Nebraska has talked to him about playing both offense and defense," North head coach Larry Martin said. "Right now, Niles feels much more comfortable with receiver, and that's where he hopes to play."

An impressive athlete, Paul runs a 4.4-second 40-yard dash and possesses a 36-inch vertical leap. He showed off his speed last spring by taking the state championship in the 110- and 300-meter hurdles.

Though Nebraska was the first school to offer him a scholarship, Paul said he was receiving heavy interest from Iowa, Notre Dame, Michigan and others.

Paul's teammate, quarterback/athlete Phillip Bates, also holds an early offer from the Huskers. The 6-2, 200-pound Bates said chances are good that he will continue his playing relationship with Paul down in Lincoln.

"Iowa and Nebraska are recruiting me real hard, and I'm getting letters from Virginia, Oklahoma and Kansas State," Bates said. "I'm looking at whoever offers me and is interested in me. Everybody is recruiting me for quarterback."

"I'd say there's a pretty good chance that Niles (Paul) and I will play together in college. As for my timetable, there's a chance I could decide early, and there's a chance I could wait it out for a while. I'll have to talk things over some with my family."

Bates' father, Phillip Bates Sr., was a starting fullback for Nebraska in the early 1980s. Despite his father's ties to Nebraska, Bates said his family will support him no matter what his decision.

"My dad is leaving everything up to me," Bates said. "My mom wants me to stay close to home, but they've both said that the decision is mine."

Bates, who runs a 4.4 40, completed 74 of 149 pass attempts for 1,207 yards and 13 touchdowns as a junior. He added 425 yards rushing for an additional eight scores. ■

the advantage of being closer to home and the other a more prestigious football program.

"I went to one of Fresno State's games," he said. "Nebraska's game was way more exciting, and the atmosphere was better. I like how Nebraska runs their whole program. As far as social life though, Lincoln probably wouldn't be as great as it would at Fresno.

"Coach Bill Busch has been recruiting me a long time, so I probably have a little bit better relationship with him. Plus, he's a safety coach, and he's recruiting me for safety."

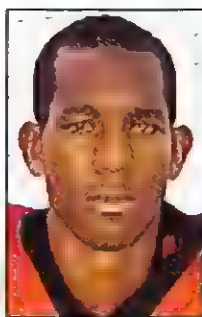
One prospect the Huskers will host in January who came onto the scene recently is wide receiver Will Henry (6-6, 195, 4.5) from J.M. Hanks High School in El Paso, Texas. Henry holds offers from Nebraska, Missouri, Texas Tech, New Mexico State and UTEP.

Henry is anxious to get to Lincoln and see what Nebraska football is all about. "Yes sir, I can't wait to see what it's like," he said. "Nebraska would be a real good school to play football for. Everybody knows that it's one of the best programs in the country. But, for me, I want to see everything — the coaches, the players, the university, the city — just everything to see how it feels and if I'm comfortable with it.

"If I feel real comfortable, I'd probably go ahead and commit before I leave. I mean, why wait? If it's everything you're looking for and you enjoy yourself there's no reason to keep people hanging on. I understand it's a business for the coaches, and they need to know where people they want on their team stand at all times."

Henry had a chance to watch the Huskers' bowl game against Michigan and has noted a solid recruiting class as well. "I know they have another great class coming in," he said. "Plus, I watched their bowl game against Michigan, and you can see they have a great team with a lot of talent that's only going to get better. They really fought for their win and that was impressive. They just wouldn't quit, so I wouldn't mind being a part of that at all."

Another wide receiver prospect whom the Huskers have been recruiting for months is Quinton Hancock (6-2, 185, 4.51) from St. Augustine High School in St. Augustine, Fla. Hancock is considering Nebraska



Will Henry



Quinton Hancock

along with Tennessee, Maryland and Georgia Tech.

The Huskers received a visit from Hancock on Sept. 9 of last year and have been in constant contact since then. "[Nebraska running backs]

Coach Randy Jordan came to the school today," Hancock said. "We talked about how things are going and about the big win they had in the bowl game."

Nebraska is being patient with Hancock, however. "He doesn't put any pressure on me," he said. "He just says that when I'm ready to make a decision to let him know."

The Husker coaches will likely be working the phones from now until signing day this year in an attempt to finish the 2006 class with a few more quality athletes. ■

For more daily recruiting information, visit huskersillustrated.com, a member of the Rivals.com network.



You Don't Need a Program to Recognize the Players on Our Team

Your local Wells Fargo team is made up of people who live and work in your community. They combine in-depth knowledge of your community with world-class financial resources – and a willingness to go the distance for you. Let us help you reach your Next Stage of financial success.

©2005 Wells Fargo Bank, N.A. All rights reserved. Member FDIC wellsfargo.com

10 QUESTIONS

with **MARCUS WALKER**

6-2/165 Fr. Guard
Kansas City, Mo.

For Marcus Walker, the most difficult aspect of his transition from high school has been physical. "I'm not weak," he said. "But I'm not experienced in the weight room or anything like that."

Well, actually, on further review, the most difficult aspect has been mental.

"You've got to be tough mentally to do this," he said. "When I came here, I didn't realize how much you practiced and put your time into the game. Back home I'd just run around and play whenever I wanted to. But here it's just like a constant beat-down of your body."

"So you've got to be mentally tough to do this every day."

As would be expected of any true freshman, Walker has been inconsistent, with good games and not-so-good games. But he's been mentally tough; otherwise he wouldn't have started 11 of 13 non-conference games. He led the team in assists during the non-conference season with 42. And he showed that he can get up and down the court, with or without the ball — and that he can score if given the opportunity.

He was second on the team in 3-point shooting percentage (.381) and scored in double figures five times in non-conference play, with a high of 20 against Alabama A&M.

Kobe Bryant or Allen Iverson?

"A.I. (Iverson); he's more my size, and he's just got a lot of heart and determination, always been the superstar on the team, and he's been able to get the job done."

What's the best thing served at the training table?

"Philly cheesesteaks, I like the cheesesteaks. The Phillies are good. And that's on top of having steaks, fried fish and baked fish, everything. But the Phillies are best."

If you could excel at any sport at Nebraska except basketball, what sport would it be?

"Track, I thought about going out this year, but I don't think I'm in good enough shape for that. Eventually, I might go out to practice with them, the 400. I ran in high school and did good. I quit my sophomore year. We had a concrete track. It was either you run on the concrete or you don't run. So I just stopped running. I was playing football, track and basketball, so I knew it wouldn't work, running on that track. It was terrible. I played football my freshman and sophomore year, wide receiver and punt return, then I didn't play my junior year because people were like, 'You're going to be highly recruited for basketball.' I started listening to that. But I missed it my junior year, so I played my senior year."

Who's the funniest guy on the team?

"B.J. Walker, he's got a way with telling stories, a story teller, and he's just overall funny, random stuff. He knows it."



If you had a CD player with which you could listen to only three CDs, what would they be?

"Maybe Ludacris, a local rapper in Kansas City named Rich the Factor and another rapper named Messy Marv; he's from California, but he does a lot of local rapping for Kansas City, too."

If you could eat only one thing for the next month, what would it be?

"Baked chicken and rice; that's my favorite. My momma cooks that. She usually tries to bring it down here every time she comes. And that's pretty often. That's the best. The sauce makes it real rich. I can't get any weight. I'm trying."

What's your favorite TV show?

"I haven't watched TV in so long, but I'd probably say the 'Jamie Foxx Show.' I try to watch that every time I get a chance to watch TV. But ever since I've been here at school, it's been constant work, like going to class during the mornings, then we have practice from 3 to 6 (p.m.). You get like an hour and a half to get your meal in, then study hall from 7:45 to 9:45. So basically at the end of the night you're tired. So I try to get my sleep. But if I do get to watch something, it'll either be the 'Jamie Foxx Show' or ESPN."

Bungee jumping, rock climbing or hang gliding?

"None, they all can lead to death. They're too scary for me."

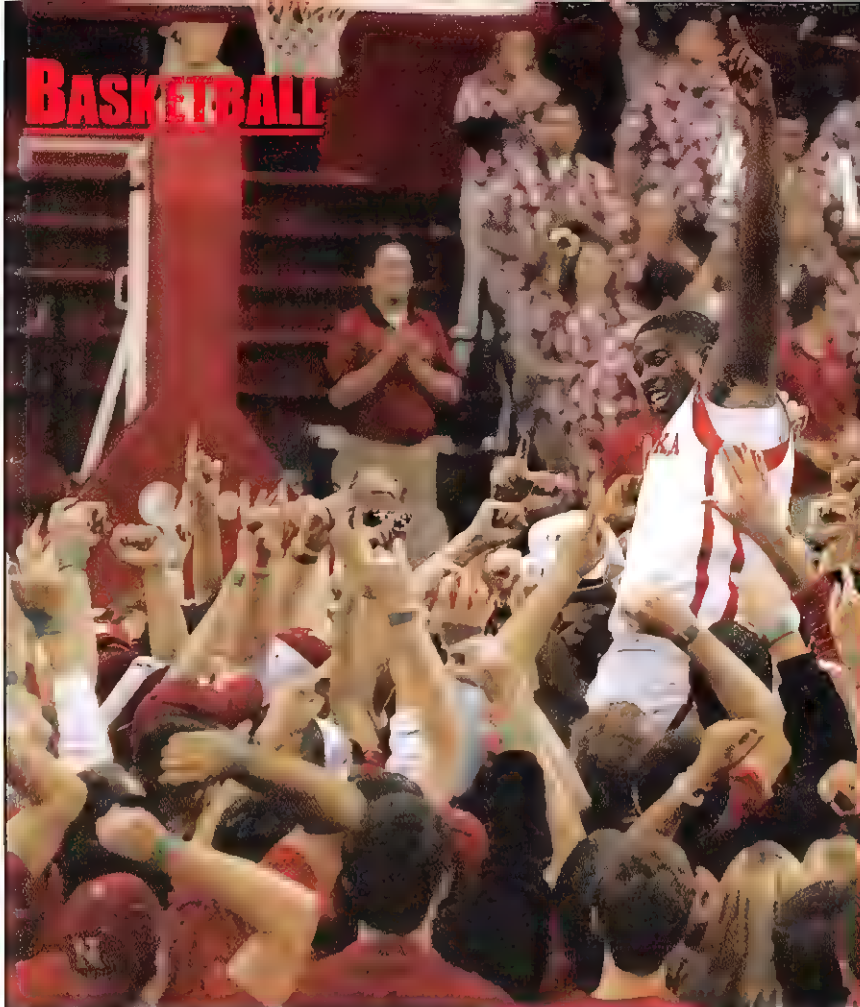
What's the best movie you've ever seen?

"I like 'Love and Basketball.' It's about two teenagers making their transition to college and (they) fall in love. They were both basketball stars and ended up going to the same college."

If you were a contestant on Star Search, what would your talent be?

"Let me see, I'd sing if I was on Star Search. I'd be William Hung, the black William Hung, yeh. I like singing. But I can't sing, so I'd probably be the black William Hung, make a fool of myself and get paid. I could be a fool for the money." ■

BASKETBALL



Sophomore guard Joe McCray is hoisted in the air after hitting a 3-pointer with 5.6 seconds left to give Nebraska a 59-58 victory over No. 12 Oklahoma.

Opening Acts

(Photos by Scott Bruhn)

Now that's entertainment. The Nebraska men's and women's basketball teams opened Big 12 Conference play on positive notes. The men upset No. 12 and No. 14-rated Oklahoma 59-58 at the Denver Sport Center when Joe McCray hit a 3-point shot from the top of the key with 5.6 seconds remaining, while the women's team snapped a 21-game losing streak against Colorado, defeating the Buffaloes 80-62 at Boulder, then handed previously unbeaten Kansas a 73-61 loss.

Freshman Kelsey Griffin was named conference rookie of the week for her efforts against Colorado and Kansas, hitting nearly 65 percent of her field goal attempts in the two games.

The 6-foot-2 Griffin, who is from Eagle River, Alaska, scored a combined 28 points and pulled down 16 rebounds in both games.



Senior guard LaToya Howell (5) and her Husker teammates celebrate a 73-61 victory over previously unbeaten Kansas.



Joe McCray reacts (bottom left) as his 3-pointer goes in to give Nebraska a 59-58 lead in the final seconds. But the game wasn't over until a shot by Oklahoma's Terrell Everett bounced off at the buzzer, starting the celebration (above). Charles Richardson (below) scored a career-high 15 points, including a 3-pointer that cut the margin to 58-56 with 24.3 seconds left.



MEN'S RESULTS

Overall: 11-3/Big 12: 1-0

Nov. 18	*Longwood, W 80-65
Nov. 19	*Yale, W 73-64
Nov. 20	*Louisiana Tech, W 59-56
Nov. 27	SE Missouri State, W 69-54
Nov. 30	Marquette, W 84-74
Dec. 3	Ala.-Birmingham, L 73-72
Dec. 8	South Dakota State, W 76-67
Dec. 11	@Creighton, L 70-44
Dec. 17	Chicago State, W 76-65
Dec. 19	North Carolina A&T, W 107-57
Dec. 21	Alabama A&M, W 67-60
Dec. 31	**Florida State, L 74-60
Jan. 3	Northern Colorado, W 60-50
Jan. 7	Oklahoma, W 59-58
Jan. 11	@Kansas State (FSN)
Jan. 17	Iowa State (FSN)
Jan. 21	@Kansas (ESPN)
Jan. 25	@Colorado (FSN)
Jan. 28	Missouri (ESPN+)
Jan. 31	@Oklahoma State (ESPN+)
Feb. 4	Baylor (ESPN+)
Feb. 8	Kansas (FSN)
Feb. 11	@Texas (ESPN)
Feb. 15	@Iowa State (FSN)
Feb. 18	Texas Tech (ESPN+)
Feb. 22	Colorado
Feb. 25	@Texas A&M (ESPN+)
March 1	Kansas State (FSN)
March 5	@Missouri (ESPN+)
Mar. 9-12	@Big 12 Tournament, Dallas, Texas (ERT)

*John Thompson Classic, Lincoln, Neb.

**Orange Bowl Classic, Miami, Fla.



Freshman forward Kelsey Griffin had 16 points and seven rebounds in the victory over Kansas.

WOMEN'S RESULTS

Overall: 10-3/Big 12: 2-0

Nov. 19	South Dakota State, L 68-49
Nov. 21	Creighton, W 84-50
Nov. 25	*LSU, L 74-55
Nov. 27	*TAMU-Corp. Christi, W 76-64
Dec. 3	@Minnesota, L 78-70
Dec. 7	Texas Southern, W 93-68
Dec. 10	@Northwestern, W 80-50
Dec. 17	@Michigan, W 69-49
Dec. 20	Texas State, W 96-47
Dec. 29	Grambling State, W 69-40
Dec. 31	Northern Arizona, W 70-56
Jan. 4	@Colorado, W 80-62
Jan. 7	Kansas, W 73-61
Jan. 11	Missouri
Jan. 14	@Iowa State
Jan. 18	Texas
Jan. 21	@Texas Tech (FSN)
Jan. 28	Colorado
Feb. 1	Iowa State (Mediacom)
Feb. 4	@Kansas State (FSN)
Feb. 8	@Baylor (CSTV)
Feb. 11	Texas A&M (FSN)
Feb. 15	@Kansas
Feb. 18	Kansas State
Feb. 21	Oklahoma State
Feb. 26	@Oklahoma (ESPN2)
March 1	@Missouri
Mar. 7-11	@Big 12 Tournament, Dallas, Texas
	*Miami Thanksgiving Classic, Miami, Fla.



Junior guard Kiera Hardy scored a game-high 26 points against the Jayhawks to move into 15th place on NU's all-time scoring list.

as the leading freshman scorer and rebounder in the conference.

The victory was the Huskers' eighth in a row.

McCray's game-winning shot came off a dribble-screen from junior point guard Charles Richardson, who scored a career-high 15 points in the men's comeback victory.

Oklahoma led 58-53 with 40.3 seconds remaining, but Richardson hit his third 3-point shot to cut the deficit to two with 24.3 seconds on the clock. Then a Wes Wilkinson steal set up the finish.

The crowd — the largest of the year at 7,894 — couldn't relax immediately after McCray's shot, however. The Sooners' Terrell Everett drove the length

of the court and missed what amounted to a lay-up as time elapsed. Everett used his left hand to put up the ball from the right side of the basket.

"I was watching him the whole time. Then when he shot it, I was like, 'Ah, it's good,'" McCray said. "It rolled out. Then I was happy; I was so happy. Then the fans were running on the court."

His winning shot came on a play called, appropriately enough, "end." The play is for use at the ends of halves, and "I'm glad we didn't run it earlier in the game because then they would have known it was coming," said McCray. "I knew it was good when it got out of my hands."

He finished 4-of-8 from 3-point range for the game. ■

Overshadowed

Cook says Huskers 'were just discombobulated a lot' in national championship match

While 2005 was certainly a rewarding season for the Nebraska volleyball team, all the record crowds, the individual honors and unprecedented recognition that the Huskers received will forever be overshadowed by one thing.

With the national championship on the line, the Huskers failed to play up to their potential.

"I think if we would have played how Nebraska volleyball usually plays, it would have been different," said the Huskers' Christina Houghtelling, who was honored as the national player of the year for her brilliant junior season.

"The hardest thing is knowing that you didn't play your best," said Nebraska's John Cook, the national coach of the year. "When you work hard to get to that point, and for whatever reasons don't play well, that's the real disappointment."

Nebraska, a team ranked No. 1 from the preseason to the final four in San Antonio, was stunningly swept in the national championship match by No. 3 Washington. The Huskies, confident and talented, proved more efficient attacking, more effective serving and superior defensively in a 30-26, 30-25, 30-26 win.

So what went wrong for the Huskers?

No. 1, they seemed to succumb to the pressure. Early jitters were so evident in the championship match that Cook called a timeout after two lost rallies.

Secondly, Nebraska struggled from the service line, erring nine times. And when the Huskers did get



No. 3 Washington proved more efficient attacking and had the Huskers scrambling for much of the title match.

By Todd Henrichs
Photos by Scott Bruhn

a serve in, too often it was handled by Washington libero Candace Lee, whose precise passes made it easy for the Huskies to execute their offensive game plan.

Nebraska, meanwhile, never managed an offensive rhythm as sub-par passes, tight sets and wild attacks beset the Huskers at different times during the match.

"It just felt like Washington was playing as more of a unit than we were," Cook said. "We were just discombobulated a lot."

The championship loss was a downer for not only the Huskers,

who finished 33-2, but also for the 2,500 or more red-clad fans who made the trek to the Alamodome to watch volleyball in mid-December.

Even after the loss, many of those fans stretched out in a long line to await autographs from sullen Husker players.

"They said, 'We're so proud of you,' and 'We're there for you,'" said NU freshman Jordan Larson. "They said, 'We'll be back next year.'"

Without a national championship, fan support was arguably the highlight of the season for the Nebraska program. In August, the Huskers

By 1 Thing



Nebraska junior Christina Houghtelling (right) was honored as the national player of the year.

opened the campaign with back-to-back wins before 10,000 fans at the Volleyball Showcase at Qwest Center Omaha.

Then in December, Nebraska drew NCAA postseason record crowds of nearly 15,000 for its regional at the Qwest Center. In between, NU fans extended the streak of consecutive sellouts at the Coliseum in Lincoln to 71 matches.

Looking ahead, the Husker faithful have already assured a sellout for the first final four to be played in Omaha in 2006.

While expectations for the Huskers probably can't get any higher, Nebraska will face unprecedented pressure in trying to win the right to play for the national championship as the host institution next season. The Huskers must replace two legends in seniors Melissa Elmer, the school's all-time leader in blocks, and Jennifer Saleaumua, NU's all-time

leader in digs.

And as he looks for replacements, Cook will face a major decision in how to work talented redshirt setter Rachel Holloway into the Huskers' system for next season. Nebraska returns both Dani Busboom, a three-year starter, and Maggie Griffin, a two-year veteran of the college game, at the setter spot.

The Huskers are solid at outside hitter with first-team All-Americans Houghtelling and Sarah Pavan returning. Houghtelling's junior season was quite a turnaround. She hit .364 compared to .229 as a sophomore.

Pavan led NU this season with 443 kills, 15 more than Houghtelling. Based primarily on play in conference matches, Pavan was the Big 12's player of the year in 2005.

Nebraska also returns Larson, on-and-off starter Dani Mancuso and sophomore middle blocker Tracy Stalls. The other middle blocker spot

will boil down to a competition among Amanda Gates and Meghan Smith, both Nebraska natives who started while Stalls was out early in the season, and incoming freshman Kori Cooper of Amarillo, Texas.

Cooper, who is coming off knee surgery, is enrolled at Nebraska and will take part in spring drills. The Huskers also plan an international trip for May, possibly to China.

Many of the ingredients are in place for Nebraska to once again contend for a title in 2006, not the least of which is the motivation of coming so close and failing to reach their goal this season.

"I think we've got lots of question marks, but I also think we've got lots of possibilities," Cook said. "There's a lot to build on." ■

Todd Henrichs covers the Nebraska volleyball team for the Lincoln Journal Star. He can be reached at 473-7439 or thenrichs@journalstar.com



2005 RESULTS

AVCA/NACWAA Showcase At Omaha, Neb.

Aug. 26 Hawaii	W 3-0
Aug. 27 Stanford	W 3-0

Ohio State Tournament At Columbus, Ohio

Sept. 2 Ohio State	W 3-0
Sept. 3 Michigan	W 3-0
Sept. 5 @Minnesota	W 3-2

Players Challenge At Lincoln, Neb.

Sept. 9 Pepperdine	W 3-0
Sept. 10 Pacific	W 3-0
Sept. 11 Penn State	W 3-0

Sept. 17 @Colorado	W 3-0
Sept. 21 Texas A&M	W 3-0
Sept. 24 Iowa State	W 3-0
Sept. 28 @Oklahoma	W 3-1
Oct. 1 Baylor	W 3-0
Oct. 5 @Missouri	W 3-1
Oct. 8 @Kansas	W 3-1
Oct. 11 Creighton	W 3-0
Oct. 12 Texas Tech	W 3-0

Oct. 15 Texas	W 3-0
Oct. 19 @Kansas State	W 3-0
Oct. 26 Kansas	W 3-0
Oct. 29 @Texas Tech	W 3-0
Nov. 2 Oklahoma	W 3-0
Nov. 5 @Iowa State	W 3-0
Nov. 9 @Texas A&M	W 3-0
Nov. 13 Missouri (CSTV)	W 3-2
Nov. 16 @Baylor	W 3-0
Nov. 19 Kansas State	W 3-1
Nov. 23 Colorado	W 3-0
Nov. 26 @Texas	L 3-2

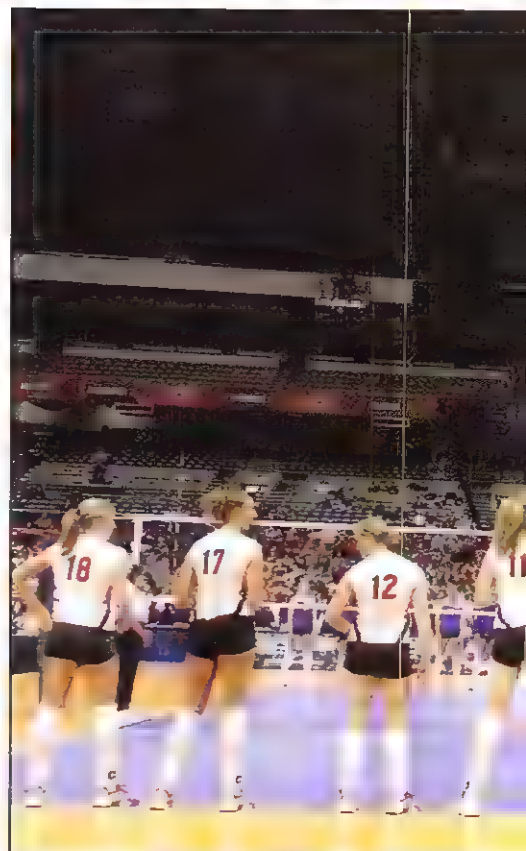
NCAA First/Second Rounds At NU Coliseum, Lincoln, Neb.

Dec. 2 Alabama A&M	W 3-0
Dec. 3 Duke	W 3-0

NCAA Regionals At Qwest Center, Omaha, Neb.

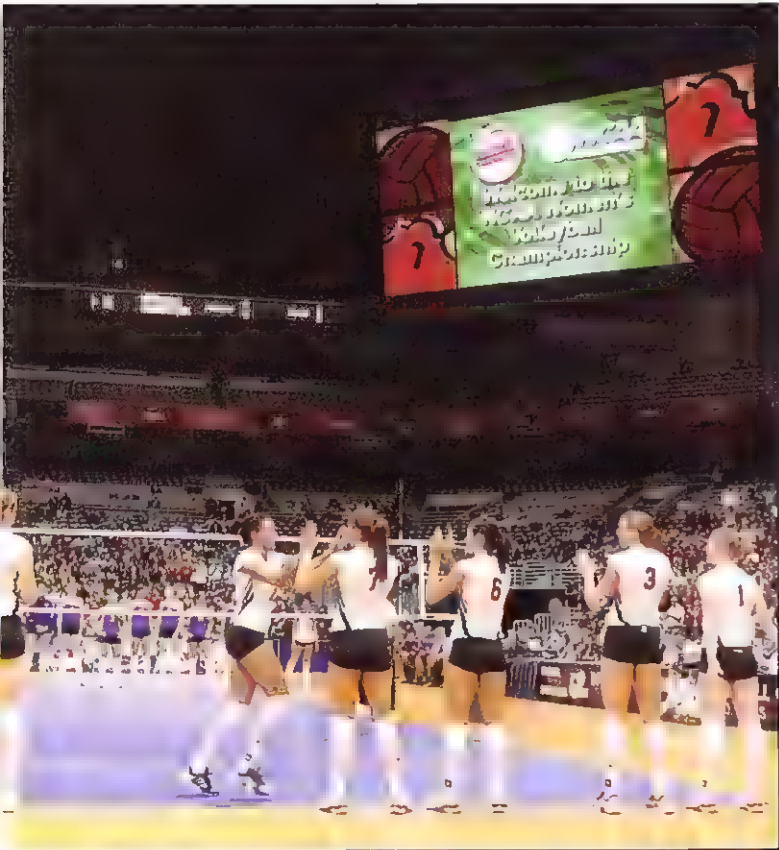
Dec. 9 UCLA	W 3-0
Dec. 10 Florida	W 3-0

NCAA Final Four At San Antonio, Texas	
Dec. 15 Santa Clara	W 3-0
Dec. 17 Washington	L 3-0





Senior All-American Jennifer Saleaumua, Nebraska's all-time leader in digs, makes a return during the semifinal victory over Santa Clara (left). (Above) Saleaumua (26), Jordan Larson, Tracy Stalls (11) and Sarah Pavan (9) celebrate a point during the 30-24, 30-19, 30-21 victory. The win moved No. 1 Nebraska into the fifth championship match in program history. The Huskers are introduced to an Alamodome crowd that included about 2,500 Nebraska fans (below). In addition to Saleaumua, Melissa Elmer (8, right), the school's all-time leader in blocks, was playing her final match as a Husker.



WRESTLING



Nebraska junior 141-pound wrestler Dominick Moyer (top) upset Virginia Tech's 10th-ranked David Hoffman, 12-11, Jan. 7 in NU's 41-3 victory. The win left the 14th-ranked Huskers 6-2.



Fellowship of Christian Athletes



FULL FORCE

Full Force is a speed, strength conditioning and nutrition training camp. Our goal is to train athletes how to compete with "full force" as Christian athletes by connecting great physical training with sound biblical principles on God's way of competing.



ONE WAY 2PLAY SHOOTING CAMP

The FCA One Way 2 Play Basketball Shooting Camps are one- or two-day camps combining basic principles for shooting the basketball and sound biblical instruction on God's way of doing sports. We also challenge athletes to say "no" to drugs and alcohol by saying "yes" to Jesus Christ.

PASS IT ON

"Pass it On" camps create the opportunity for sons and fathers to spend quality time together through the common bond of sports. Dads learn from great coaches how to teach their sons about throwing and catching while also learning to pass on a spiritual legacy of faith and trust in Jesus Christ.

LEADERSHIP CAMP

The 2005 Hastings Leadership Camp was a great success for us. Our theme was "Heart of a Champion" and the theme verse was Mark 12:30. The heart of Christ is lived out when we consciously think and perform God's way through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. We focused on three areas for the campers to apply this

- Competition - to learn to compete God's way
- Campus - to learn to share Jesus Christ with teammates and classmates on their campus
- Culture - to recognize the difference between God's way and the world's way in today's culture



Visit nebraskafca.org or call 402-464-2343 for more information.

CROSSWORD

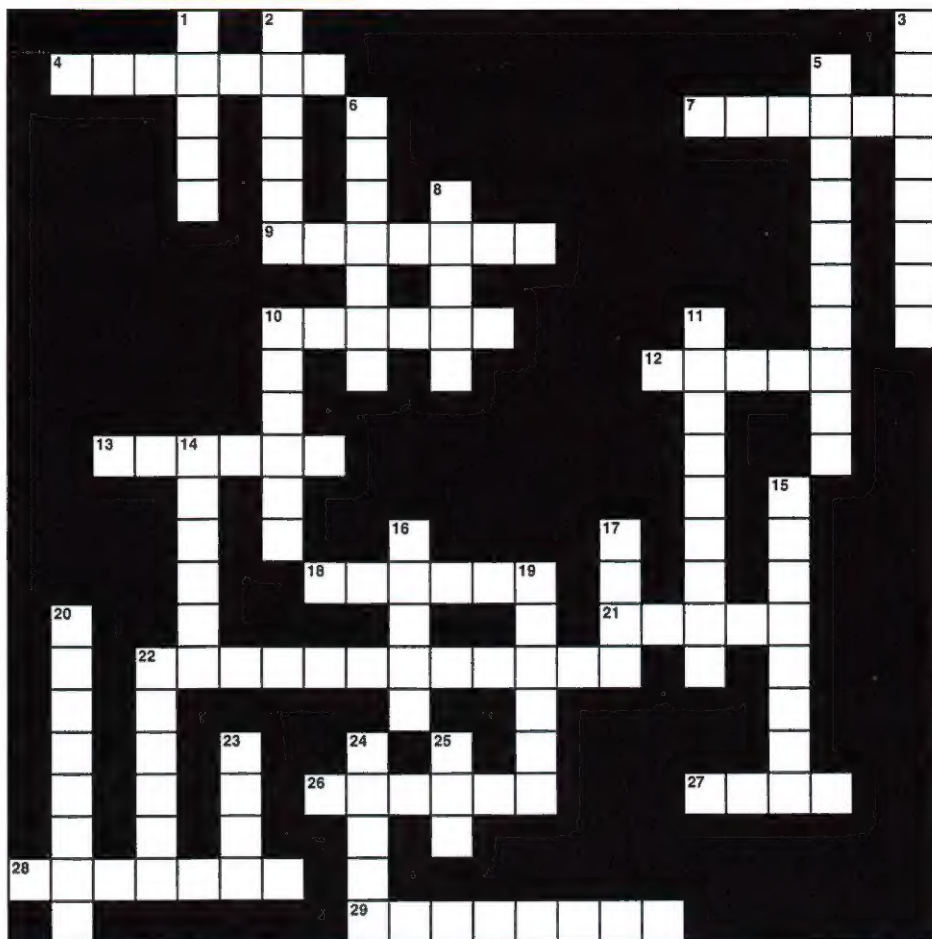
ACROSS

- 4 Offensive tackle from Colorado
- 7 Rushed for 285 yards vs. Kansas in 1983
- 9 Offensive coordinator
- 10 Made winning 3-point shot vs. Oklahoma
- 12 Rushed for 294 yards vs. Kansas in 1991
- 13 Barry Collier's alma mater
- 18 Scored 20 touchdowns in 2000
- 21 Record-setting freshman receiver
- 22 Linebacker making first start in Alamo Bowl
- 26 New tight ends coach
- 27 Alamo Bowl offensive player-of-the-game
- 28 Assistant leaving for Northern Colorado
- 29 Defensive coordinator

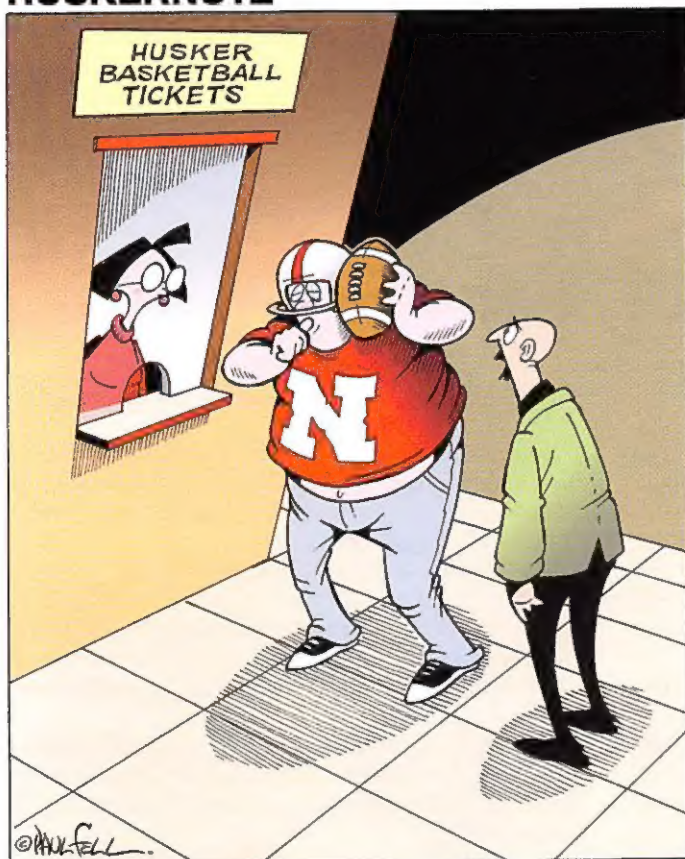
DOWN

- 1 Freshman I-back from California
- 2 Basketball all-time leading scorer
- 3 2005 sacks leader
- 5 Basketball point guard
- 6 Offensive tackle from Michigan
- 8 2005 national champion
- 10 Leading tackler in Alamo Bowl
- 11 Ex-Husker lineman on Patriots
- 14 Single-season passing record-holder
- 15 Tackler on final play of Alamo Bowl
- 16 School Tommie Frazier coached in 2005
- 17 2005 Heisman Trophy winner
- 19 Tight end who missed 2005 season
- 20 Caught 2-point conversion pass in Alamo Bowl
- 22 Had interception in Alamo Bowl
- 23 Scored 2 TDs in Alamo Bowl
- 24 Basketball player from Australia
- 25 Nonconference opponent in 2006

Answers in March issue



HUSKERNUTZ



SOME OF US HAVE DIFFICULTY WITH THE TRANSITION FROM FOOTBALL SEASON TO WINTER SPORTS.

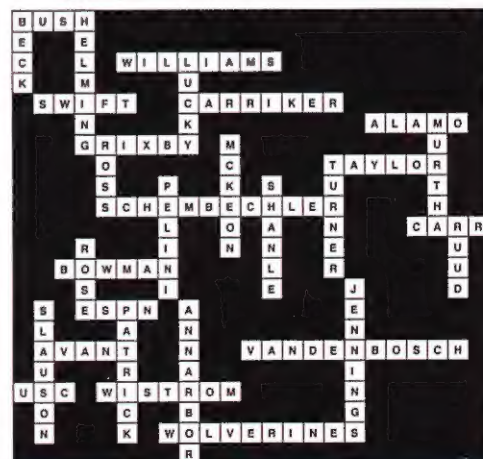
IDEAS?

DO YOU HAVE SOME INSPIRATION FOR A HUSKERNUTZ CARTOON? IF WE USE YOUR IDEA, WE'LL GIVE YOU CREDIT AND SEND YOU AN AUTOGRAPHED FULL-COLOR PRINT OF YOUR HUSKERNUTZ CARTOON!

SEND IDEAS TO: PAUL FELL CARTOONS, 3215 JAMESTOWN LANE, LINCOLN, NE 68516 OR EMAIL TO:

paulfellcartoons@alltel.net

JANUARY CROSSWORD SOLUTION



Surreal Finish

'I'm glad somebody else didn't think it was over'



**Mike
BABCOCK**

TIERRE GREEN CARRIED two large balloons, purple and orange, one under each arm, saving them from destruction beneath the feet of teammates, media types and a handful of adventurous fans who managed to work their way out of the stands and onto the field to celebrate the 32-28 victory.

The turf was littered with the remnants of confetti and balloons dropped from the ceiling of the Alamodome. The air was heavy with the smell of exploded fireworks.

Minutes earlier, a stage had been wheeled out to the middle of the field for the presentation of the bowl trophy. "I'm getting on that stage," Adam Ickes said, heading toward it.

Two dozen players climbed on, some sitting with legs dangling off the front edge.

"I couldn't be any prouder," a smiling Bill Callahan said above the hubbub.

After the presentation, deadline-driven reporters scrambled for interviews while members of the Nebraska sports information office tried to herd players to the locker room.

Because of replays, commercial breaks and an expanded halftime show common to bowls, the game lasted 4 hours and 4 minutes, finishing at 11:15 p.m. So time was of the essence.

"I saw all the reporters running on the field. I was running down the field. I couldn't breathe, but it was the last play of the game," Adam Carriker said as SID Keith Mann coaxed him off the field.

"I thought it was over. I'm glad somebody else didn't think it was over."

Zack Bowman was somebody else. And so was Titus Brothers.

The two defensive backs combined to tackle Michigan tight end Tyler Ecker on the final play of the game, knocking him out of bounds in the process, at the Cornhusker 13-yard line.

Had they considered the game over, Ecker would have scored a winning touchdown. "It was one of those just-in-case things, me and Titus. 'Man, I'm just going to make sure,'" said Bowman.

"I saw him (Ecker) the whole time; he just kept running."

The finish was as surreal as a Salvador Dali painting and prompted an addendum to the official play-to-play, released the next day under the heading "LAST PLAY OF THE GAME."

Michigan had second-and-10 at its own 36-yard line with 2 seconds remaining. The play began with a 13-yard pass from quarterback Chad Henne to wide receiver Jason

Avant, who initiated a series of laterals and pitches, always backward, involving teammates Steve Breaston, Mike Hart, Mario Manningham and Mark Bihl, a center who tried, unsuccessfully, to catch a lateral pass across the field.

Though the ball hit the ground, it remained live, a fumble Hart picked up and pitched to Ecker, who set off on the 62-yard sprint finally terminated by Bowman and Brothers.

"The best thing to do was get him down so there was no discrepancy," Brothers said.

About the time Hart picked up the ball that Bihl couldn't catch, Callahan took the obligatory drenching, and the Cornhuskers swarmed onto the field to celebrate.

"I was thinking we rushed the field too quick," said Zac Taylor.

Photographers and reporters also ran onto the field from the Nebraska sideline while Ecker rumbled along the Michigan sideline, encouraged by a Wolverine assistant who ran on the field in pursuit. Wolverines had begun running onto the field as well. Chaos reigned.

If Nebraska had been penalized for going on the field, Michigan would have been, too.

Callahan compared the finish to the one in 1992 when California used laterals and backward pitches on a kickoff return, winding through the Stanford band in the process, to score the winning touchdown with no time on the clock. "I caught it out of the side of my eye," he said the next day.

When Bowman and Brothers brought down Ecker, Callahan was on the field, near the 50-yard line, with ESPN sideline reporter Erin Andrews, preparing for an interview.

"So I think ESPN gets a penalty, too," Callahan said.

Before the snap, ESPN analyst Kirk Herbstreit introduced a laudatory comment about Callahan and the direction of the program with: "Let's jump ahead and assume Nebraska holds on here . . ."

The Cornhuskers did, but not without a touch of the bizarre.

The lesson of Callahan's second season as Cornhusker coach was: Never jump ahead. Take each game as its own entity. And above all, assume nothing, regardless of the situation.

Assumptions made during a three-game losing streak, and particularly after a 40-15 loss at Kansas proved false, as did the initial assumption that Michigan was two touchdowns better.

"It was really a unique finish," said Callahan.

He was talking about the Alamo Bowl game. But the same applied to the season. ■



Balloons and confetti were part of the postgame ceremonies.

RECRUITING SEASON IS HERE

HUSKERSILLUSTRATED.COM IS THE AUTHORITY FOR HUSKER RECRUITING NEWS

LOG ON NOW TO SEE:

- ▶ DAILY RECRUITING UPDATES
- ▶ EXTENSIVE PROSPECT DATABASE
- ▶ VIDEOS OF OUR TOP PROSPECTS

7-Day
FREE
TRIAL



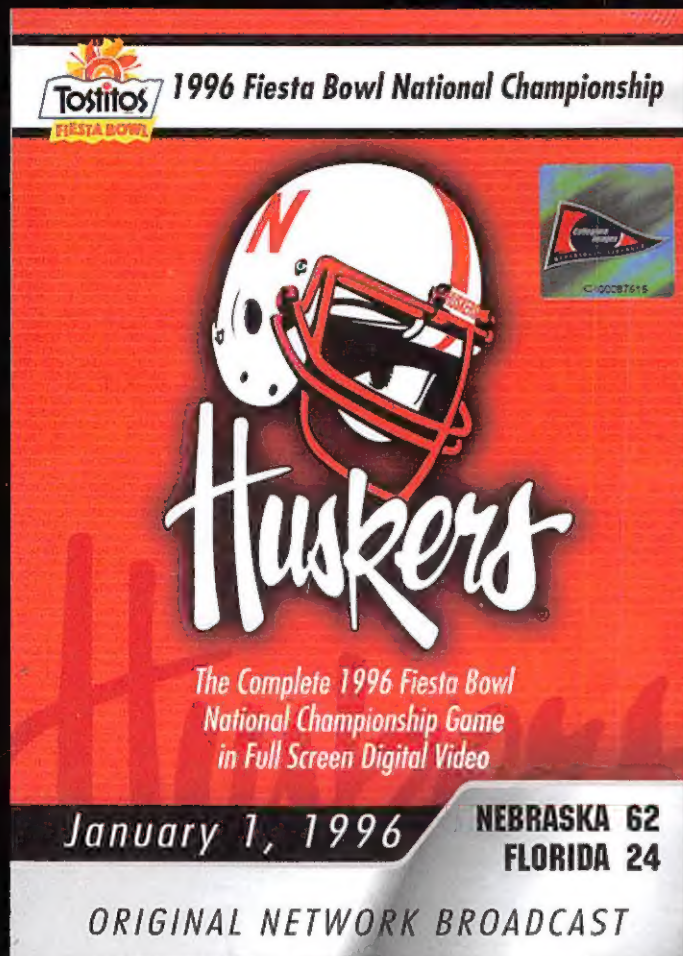
www.HuskersIllustrated.com

powered by



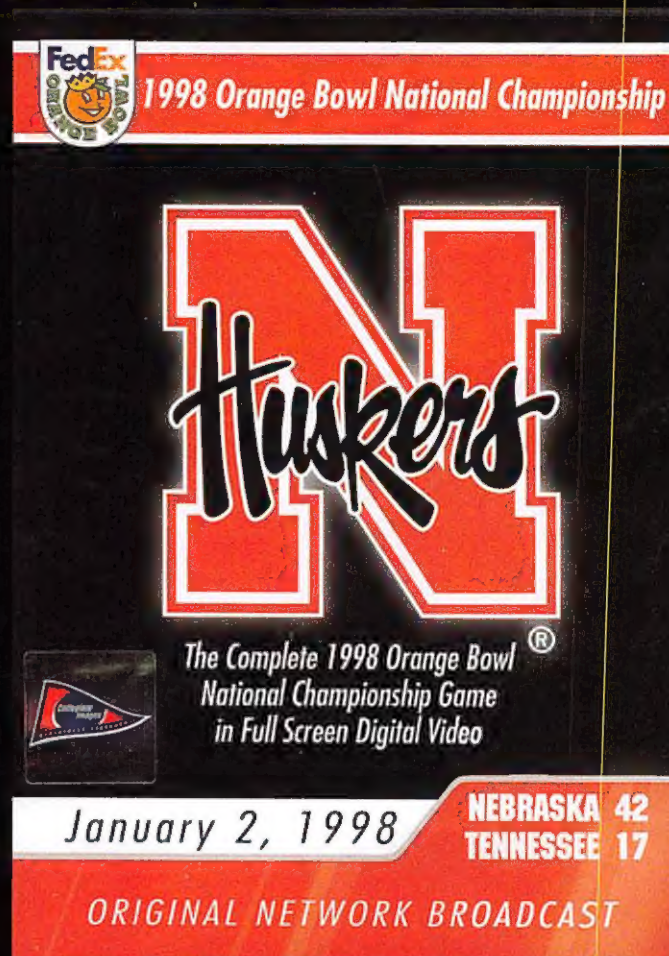
CHAMPIONSHIP GAME DVD!

Relive The **GLORY DAYS!**



1996 NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

The complete full-screen digital video original network broadcast of Nebraska's 62-24 rout of Florida in the 1996 Fiesta Bowl title game on Jan. 1, 1996.



1998 NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

The complete full-screen digital video original network broadcast of Nebraska's 42-17 win over Tennessee and QB Peyton Manning in the Orange Bowl in Coach Tom Osborne's finale.

Only \$24.99 each. Get both for \$46!

Shop 24/7 at www.SHOPHuskersIllustrated.com
Telephone 800.524.9527